NUPTIALITY TRENDS, DIFFERENTIALS AND DETERMINANTS

Introduction

Marital status is an important variable affecting fertility behavior particularly in a non-contraception society and where most of the births take place within the marital union. Keeping in view the importance of the variable all the four Nepalese Censuses held since 1952/ 54 have collected information on the marital status of the population above a minimum age. This minimum age varied from one census to the other. For example, in 1952/54 the particulars in regard to marital status were obtained for the population aged 5 years and above. In the subsequent two censuses (1961 and 1971) the age limit was raised to 6 years and above. And this was once again raised to 10 years and above in 1981.

Each census has obtained information on marital status under four categories, viz: i) never married, ii) married, iii) widowed and iv) divorced /separated. There is little intercensal variation in operational definitions employed to measure each of above marital status categories with the exception of the 1981 census when these definition were further classified and elaborated. The operational definitions of marital status categories adopted by the censuses of 1952/54, 1961 and 1971 were as follows :

i) never married: A person who has not lived as husband and wife even once is known as a person who has never married.

ii) married: A person who has lived as husband and wife after being married religiously or socially is defined as married.

iii) widower /widow :- *A* man who has lost his wife due to death and has not remarried is defined as a widower. On the other hand if a woman has lost her husband on account of death and has not remarried she is known as a widow.

iv) divorced: A married persons who has broken up the marital relationship is classified as divorced. And if the wife has chosen another husband but the husband has not yet remarried he is considered as divorced.

The definition adopted by the 1981 census were as follows:

i) never married: A person who is not married in any way (Legally, religiously, or socially), or who has not lived *as* husband or wife even once at the time of the census is known as a person who has never married.

ii) Married : *No matter how one is married, one who* has lived once as a husband or wife in the community and has continued to do so is known as a married person, even though, living in separate places.

iii) widowed *:* If the wife is dead at the time of the census, the person is known as a widower. If the wife loses her husband on account of his death she is known as a widow. In the case of such persons if they have not remarried at the time of census they are known as widower or widow. But if they are remarried they are considered to be married again.

iv) **divorced** : The married person who has broken the marital status legally or by any means is known as divorced. If the husband and wife continue to live separately for ever they are considered to be divorced. If the wife has chosen another husband but if the husband has not yet remarried at the time of the census, the husband is considered divorced. But once the husband and wife have divorced and lived separately and after sometime both remarry other people, they are considered to be married.

An important difference, one finds, between the definitions employed by the census of 1952/54, 1961 and 1971 on the one hand and the definition employed by the 1981 census on the other, is that the latter lays more emphasis on the legal aspect of marriage while the former place more emphasis on religious and social aspects.

The other inter censal change, one comes across, is the practice in coding information on the marital status. In the censuses of 1952/ 54 and 1961 eligible people for whom information on their marital status could not be obtained, were classified as "unstated". But in the 1971 and 1981 censuses there was no "unstated" category, even though there were eligible people from whom information on their marital status could not be obtained When coding the data of the 1971 and 1991 censuses, if the information on marital status of an eligible person was missing, he/she was assigned to any of the four marital status categories (never married, married, widowed, and divorced) on the basis of some *a priori* internally consistent assumptions.

The quality of data on 'marital status' obtained by the census is considered to be fairly reliable. The marital status picture one obtains employing the census data roughly corresponds to the picture one gets by employing nationally representative data collected independently (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1- Percentage distribution of never married and ever-married women 15 years of age and above, Nepal, Census years 1971, Nepal Fertility Survey (NFS) 1976 and Census 1981

	1971 Census		1976 NFS*		1981 Census	
Age of Women	Never Married	Ever Mairried	Never Married	Ever Married	Never Married	Ever Married
15-19	39.3	60.7	37.3	62.7	49.2	50.8
20 – 24	7.9	92.1	6.0	94.0	13.1	86.9
25-29	2.7	97.3	1.8	98.2	5.3	94.7
30-34	1.4	98.6	1.2	98.8	3.1	96.9
35-39	1.1	98.9	0.6	99.4	2.6	97.4
40-44	0.9	99.1	0.5	99.5	2.5	97.5
45-49	0.8	99.2	0.7	99.3	2.9	97.1

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975-Population Census 1971, Vol. II, Part II, Table 15;
      „   „   1984- Population Census 1981, Vol. II, Table 15;
*Nepal Family Planning and Maternal Child Health Project, 1977. Npal Fertility Survey 1976, First Report, Table 4.1

This external consistency check further ensures the reliability of the census data on marital status. Even though the quality of census data on marital status is good, there may still be some room, for irregularities. For example, a young adult girl (20-29 years) though being widowed may prefer not to respond to the marital status question or report herself as `single' the social taboos associated with widow particularly at this young age. An enumerator, keeping in view the prevailing practice of early marriage, may also check an unmarried young girl (20-24 years of age) as married without actually asking her. Similarly, the separated and divorced women may report themselves as either `single' or `divorced' given the social stigma attached to these positions, even though `separation' and `divorce' are legally recognized. Irregularities of these kinds, cannot be totally ruled out from the census count.

Intercensal Changes : Overall Situation

One interesting feature of the marital situation in Nepal is that among the "currently married" persons the number of females exceeds that of males in every census since 1952/54. The 1952/54 census enumerates 1091 females "currently married" for every 1000 "currently married males". And this pattern continues through 1981 (see Table 5.2.) This slight excess or females is consistent with the census data obtained from other parts of the world[1,] and the neighboring countries particularly India and Bangladesh[2] . An explanation for this excess of females over males among the "currently married" persons could be found in husbands working

abroad[3] leaving behind their spouses either voluntary or involuntary and/or the limited practice of polygamy.

Table 5.2- Sex ratio among the currently married persons, Nepal, **Census years 1952/54-1981.**

Census years	Currently married males	Currently married females	Sex ratio (per thousand
1952/54	1,905,571	2,078,957	1,091
1961	2,149, 756	2,373,199	1,104
1971	2,655,329	2,837,398	1,069
1981	3,347,744	3,63 4,205	1,086

Source : Same as are those in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 presents data on the marital distribution of the population aged 10 years and above for the four censuses since 1952/54. An examination of the table shows some clear, though modest changes in the composition of population by marital status particularly during the last three decades 1961-81. For example, one finds a modest but steady increase in the proportion of singles during the census periods 1961 and 1981, from 29 per cent to 35 per cent for males and 15 per cent to 23 per cent for females. However, this was not accompanied by the expected decline in the proportion married. More than 60 per cent of the population aged 10 years and over remain married in all the census years, the proportion being higher among females than among males. During the period 1952/54 to 1981, the proportion of married males declined very modestly from 65 to 62 per cent but for females this increased from 68 to 71 per cent. The failure to find the proportion who were married declining in comparison

[1] United Nations, 1983 : *Demographic Year Book.*
[2] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1974. Bangladesh Population Census Report, National Volume, Dhaka: Government Printing Press.

[3] Nepal has a long history of emigration of men particularly at the young adult ages between 20-34 years

with the increasing proportion remaining single, may be attributed to the considerable decline in widowhood. During the intercensal period 1952/54 to 1981, the proportion widowed declined by 66 per cent, from 16.4 to 5.5 per cent for females and 54 per cent for males 5.2 to 2.4 per cent for males. As a result , more and more persons particularly women are remaining within the marital union. The proportion of males who were divorced or separated declined slightly from 0.5 in 1952/54 to 0.4 in 1981, the corresponding figure for the female remained unchanged at 0.3 per cent between 1961 and 1971 and

thereafter increased slightly to 0.4 percent in 1981 reaching the level of 1952/54. The intercensal marriage pattern as noted above remains unchanged even when allowance is made for the effect of variation in age distribution over the years (see the standardized rates).

We have so far presented the overall picture of marital composition of the population. This, however, conceals the changes, in marital status particularly those which took place in recent years . To get an idea of this change, we need to look at the marital distribution by age group.

Table 5.3 Marital status of population aged 10 years and over by sex, Nepal, Census years 1952/54 - 1981

Sex and marital status	1952/54 census			1961 census			1971 census			1981 census		
	Number	Percent	Standardized percent [a]	Number	Percent	Standardized percent [a]	Number	Percent	Standardized percent [a]	Number	Percent	Standardized percent [a]
Males												
All statuses	2,931,207	100.0	100.0	3,288,362	100.0	100.0	4,140,804	100.0	100.0	5,387,614	100.0	100.0
Never married	851,449	29.0	28.7	936,072	28.5	28.8	1,322,153	31.9	31.9	1,891,864	35.1	35.1
Married	1,905,571	65.0	65.1	2,149,756	65.4	65.7	2,655,329	64.1	64.0	3,347,744	62.1	62.1
Widowed	151,035	5.2	5.7	156,401	4.7	5.1	151,564	3.7	3.8	127,338	2.4	2.4
Divorced / seperated	15,622	0.5	0.5	13,163	0.4	0.4	11,758	0.3	0.3	20,668	0.4	0.4
unknown	7,530	0.3	-	32,964	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Female												
All statuses	3,072,152	100.0	100.0	3,431,695	100.0	100.0	4,037,816	100.0	100.0	5,130,274	100.0	100.0
Never married	470,560	15.3	16.1	518,912	15.1	16.1	781,502	19.3	20.0	1,195,111	23.3	23.3
Married	2,078,957	67.7	67.0	2,373,199	69.2	69.5	2,837,398	70.3	69.9	3,634,205	70.8	70.8
Widowed	504,688	16.4	16.5	489,381	14.3	14.1	407,786	10.1	9.8	279,558	5.5	5.5
Divorced / seperated	12,326	0.4	0.4	11,822	0.3	0.3	11,130	0.3	0.3	21, 400	0.4	0.4
unknown	5,621	0.2	-	38,382	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

a) Standardized on the basis of the 1981 age structure.

Source : Central Bureau of Statistics, 1958 population census 1952/54 Vol. I Part II, Table 6;

Source : Central Bureau of Statistics, 1968 population census 1961 Vol. III Part IV, Table 7;

Source : Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975 population census 1971 Vol. II Part II, Table 15;

Source : Central Bureau of Statistics, 1981 population census 1981 Vol. II, Table 15;

Proportion Married by age and sex

Table 5.4 provides data in the percentage

distribution of the married population aged 10 years and above by age and sex.

Table 5. 4 Age sex specific proportion of married persons, Nepal, Census years 1952/54 – 1981 and percentaqge change in proportions married between 1961 – 71 1971 – 1981 and 1961 –1981.

Age groups	Males			Percentage Change Males			Females			Percentage Change Females		
	1961	1971	1981	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81	1961	1971	1981	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81
6-9	2.97	1.20	-	-60.0	-	-	5.29	2.33	-	-55.9	-	-
10-14	10.59	6.23	14.03	-41.2	125.2	32.5	24.64	13.36	13.36	-45.8	0.0	45.8
15-19	35.86	26.62	25.09	-25.8	-5.7	-30.0	71.42	60.19	50.05	-15.7	-16.8	29.9
20-24	69.62	65.59	57.82	-5.8	-11.8	-16.9	91.57	91.07	85.93	-0.5	-5.6	-17.1
25-29	85.27	85.65	78.80	0.4	-8.0	-7.6	93.71	95.42	93.21	1.8	-2.3	-0.5
30-34	90.42	91.50	85.76	1.2	-6.3	-5.2	91.83	94.99	94.78	3.4	-0.2	3.2
35-39	91.83	93.31	88.97	1.6	-4.7	-3.1	86.65	91.95	93.81	6.1	2.0	8.3
40-44	91.05	92.93	89.09	2.1	-4.2	-2.2	78.32	86.64	91.12	10.6	5.2	16.3
45-49	89.50	92.44	89.16	3.3	-3.5	-0.4	68.59	80.57	87.80	17.5	9.0	28.0
50-54	86.96	90.51	88.36	4.1	-2.4	1.6	59.15	70.82	81.74	19.7	15.4	38.2
55-59	84.13	88.54	87.18	5.2	-1.5	3.6	50.78	66.62	79.06	31.2	18.7	55.7
60+	73.17	78.95	80.82	7.9	2.4	10.5	32.13	44.38	61.04	38.1	37.5	90.0
All ages*	65.37	64.13	62.14	-1.9	-3.1	-4.9	69.16	70.27	70.84	1.6	1.0	2.4

* Inrespect of population aged 10 years and above.

Source : Same as are those in table 5.5

Examination of the table shows the following major features of marital patterns and changing during the intercensal period : i) early years marriages was considered to be almost universal in Nepal and there has been little change from this situation. In 1981 13 percent of females in the age group 10 – 14 were reported to be currently married but by the age of 30 – 34, 95 percent of females were married. ii) there shows a curvilinear relationship between age and proportion married. The propensity to marry tends to rise with age up to peak at middle age tapers off thereafter iv) the absolute majority of men and women are married in the age groups in 20-29 and 30-39 respectively v) the proportion of males currently married was lower in 1981 compared to 1971 at almost every age group with the exception being the

youngest and the highest age group. But this decline is well marked for every age group. However, there has been a remarkable decline in the proportion of population currently married in the age groups 15-19 and 20–24. In the 1961 census the proportion of currently married female age groups 15- 19 and 20 24 was reported to 71 and 92 percent. In the 1981 census, the corresponding figures were 50 and 86 respectively experiencing 30 and 17 percent decline. The pace of decline in the proportion married is equally marked among the males. For Example, in the 1961 census the proportion of currently married males in age groups 15 – 19 and 20 – 24 was reported to be 36 and 70 percent. The corresponding figures in the 1981 census were 25 percent and 58 percent, giving a 30 percent and 17

per cent decline. This sharp reduction in the proportion married in the younger age groups during the last two decades may be interpreted as a deliberate attempt on the part of young people to postpone marriage. And this is also reflected in the increasing proportion of single people at the younger ages, 15-19 and 20-24 years. For instance, in the 1961 census the proportions of women who had never married in age-groups 15-19 and 20-24 were reported to be 26 and 5 per cent respectively. In the 1981 census the corresponding figures were 49 and 13 per cent (see table 5.5). The increase in the proportion of single men among the younger males is much more pronounced. In the 1961 census, the proportions of men who had never married in age-groups 15-19

and 20-24 were reported to be 63 and 26 per cent. In the 1981 census the corresponding figures were 74 and 41 per cent. There also is evidence of a steady increase in the proportion of single men in almost all age-groups over the period 1961-81.

The percentage of those who had never married in the age-group 45-49 indicates the degree of permanent `celibacy' present in a society. This was virtually absent in Nepal in 1961 and 1971 when the proportion of single men and women in the age-group 45-49 were less than two and one per cent respectively. However, these figures in 1981 have increased to 7 and 3 per cent for males and females respectively.

Table 5.5- Age-sex-specific proportions of never married persons, Nepal, Census Years 1961-1981 and percentage changes in proportions never married between 1961-71, 1971-81 and 1961-81

Age Group	Males			Percentage change Males			Females			Percentage change Females		
	1961	1971	1981	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81	1961	1971	1981	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81
6- 9	97.01	98.78	-	1.8	-	-	94.67	97.65	-	3.1	-	-
10-14	89.30	93.71	85.11	4.9	-9.2	-4.7	75.14	86.56	85.73	15.2	-0.9	14.1
15-19	63.33	73.02	74.13	15.3	1.5	17.1	25.68	39.33	49.17	53.1	25.0	91.5
20-24	26.35	33.11	40.85	25.6	23.4	55.0	5.33	7.86	13.06	47.5	66.2	145.0
25-29	10.21	12.26	19.52	20.1	59.2	91.2	1.91	2.59	5.35	35.6	106.6	180.1
30-34	4.72	5.69	12.36	20.5	117.2	161.9	1.04	1.40	3.07	34.6	119.3	195.2
35-39	2.71	3.25	8.93	19.9	174.8	229.5	0.77	1.11	2.63	44.2	136.9	241.5
40-44	2.06	2.31	8.03	12.1	247.6	289.8	0.68	0.92	2.52	35.3	173.9	270.6
45-49	1.60	1.60	7.36	0.0	360.0	360.0	0.58	0.77	2.93	32.8	280.5	405.2
50-54	1.47	1.43	6.88	-2.7	381.1	368.0	0.55	0.70	3.56	27.3	408.6	547.3
55-59	1.26	1.22	7.04	-3.2	477.0	458.7	0.50	0.68	4.20	36.0	517.6	740.0
60+	0.98	1.11	7.83	13.3	605.4	699.0	0.45	0.62	6.24	37.8	906.4	1286.7
All ages*	28.47	31.93	35.11	12.2	9.9	23.3	15.12	19.35	23.29	28.0	20.4	54.0

* In respect of population aged 10 years and above.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1968-Population Census 1961, Vol. III, Part IV, Table 7;
                    ,,   1975-Population Census 1971, Vol. II, Part II, Table 15;
                    ,,   1984-Population Census 1981, Vol. II, Table 15.

Singulate Mean Age at Marriage

The reduction in the proportion of married people on the one hand and rise in proportion of single people on the other particularly in the younger age-groups, resulted in increasing the mean age at marriage. In the absence of a direct question on the age at marriage in the censuses, we have made an indirect estimate of mean age at marriage by the *Hajnal Technique* known as *Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM)[4]*. This is computed from the proportion who are single, that is never married, in each age group. The data is presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6-Singulate mean ages at marriage, 1961-81

	Years		
	1961	**1971**	**1981**
Mean age: Males	19.4	20.8	21.8
Mean age: Females	15.1	16.7	17.1
Difference	4.3	4.1	4.7

Source : Calculated from Table 5.5

There shows a steady increase in the singulate mean age at marriage from 1961 to 1981. The values of SMAM have increased by at least 2 years since 1961 for both males and females and these are in 1981 about 22 years for males and 17 years for females. However, 4-5 years differences in SMAM for males and females still remain unchanged during the last two decades (1961-81).

Widowhood

The percentage distribution of widowers and widows by five year age-groups for the census years (1961-81) is presented in Table 5.7.

Examination of the table shows the following pattern of widowhood and its changes over time.

i) the proportion of the widowed tends to increase with age reaching its peak in the highest age-group.

Table 5.7-A.ge-specific proportion of widowed persons, Nepal, Census years 1961-1981 and percent age change in proportions widowed between 1961-71, 1971-81 and 1961-81

Age Group	Males			Percentage change Males			Females			Percentage change Females		
	1961	1971	1981	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81	1961	1971	1981	1951-71	1971-81	1961-81
6- 9	0.01	0.01	-	-	-	-	0.04	0.02	-	-50.0	-	-
10-14	0.08	0.04	0.68	-50.0	1600.0	750.0	0.18	0.06	0.70	-66.7	1066.7	288.9
15-19	0.57	0.24	0.55	-57.9	129.2	-3.5	0.80	0.30	0.49	-62.5	63.3	-38.8
20-24	1.53	0.90	0.82	-41.2	-8.9	-46.4	1.62	0.73	0.62	-54.9	-15.1	-61.7
25-29	2.45	1.59	1.09	-35.1	-31.4	-55.5	3.24	1.64	1.03	-49.4	-37.2	-68.2
30-34	3.25	2.35	1.35	-27.7	-42.6	-58.5	6.14	3.28	1.73	-46.6	-47.3	-71.8
35-39	4.11	3.05	1.67	-25.8	-45.2	-59.4	11.56	6.62	3.10	-42.7	-53.2	-73.2
40-44	5.68	4.40	2.48	-22.5	-43.6	-56.3	19.88	12.10	5.82	-39.1	-51.9	-70.7
45-49	7.72	5.67	3.11	-26.6	-45.1	-59.7	29.57	18.30	8.74	-38.1	-52.2	-70.4
50-54	10.41	7.79	4.39	-25.2	-43.6	-57.8	38.99	28.13	14.08	-27.9	-49.9	-63.9
55-59	13.51	9.99	5.44	-26.1	-45.5	-59.7	47.24	32.39	16.20	-31.4	-50.0	-65.7
60+	24.50	19.68	10.92	-19.7	-44.5	-55.4	65.73	54.65	32.07	-16.9	-41.3	-51.2
All ages*	4.76	3.66	2.36	-23.1	-35.5	-50.4	14.26	10.10	5.45	-29.2	-46.0	-61.8

*In respect of population aged 10 years and above.

Source: Same as are those in Table 5.5

4. This measure is an estimate of the average number of years lived by a cohort of women before their first marriage giving a good approximation to the age at marriage in a population (Hajnal, John, 1953. "Age at Marriage and Proportions Marrying", Population Studies, Vol. VII, No. 2 pp:ll1-136.)

This is expected in view of greater risk of mortality at higher ages and its variation by sex;

ii) there is a considerable decline in the proportion widowed at every age--group during the period 1961 to 1981, reflecting to a certain extent the declining mortality;

iii) proportion of widows exceeds that of widowers at every age group. For instance, 32 per cent of women aged 60 years and above were widowed in 1981. The corresponding figure for males was only 11 per cent. The glaring disparity in widowhood between men and women may be attributed to higher chances of remarriage among the former than among the latter and also spouses of the former are younger and hence wives have a higher chance of survival than their husbands.

Proportion Divorced/Separated

Table 5.8 presents data on the percentage distribution of divorced/separated persons by age and sex for the census years 1961-81. Although the proportion of divorced/separated persons accounts for a small fraction of the total number of people who have ever married, it showed a tendency to increase during the last intercensal period.

Table 5.8-Age-sex-specific proportion of divorce /separated persons, Nepal, Census years 1951--1931 and percentage changes inproportions divorced/separated between 1961-71, 1971--31 and 1951-81

Age Group	Males			Percentage change Males			Females			Percentage change Females		
	1961	1971	1981	1961–71	1971–81	1961–81	1961	1971	1981	1961–71	1971–81	1961–81
10-14	0.02	0.02	0.17	–	750.0	750.0	0.03	0.02	0.21	-33.3	950.0	600.0
15-19	0.23	0.13	0.23	-43.5	77.0	0.0	0.29	0.18	0.29	-37.9	61.0	0.0
20-24	0.63	0.40	0.52	-36.5	30.0	-17.5	0.45	0.33	0.39	-26.7	18.2	-13.3
25-29	0.69	0.50	0.60	-27.5	20.0	-13.0	0.45	0.35	0.42	-22.2	20.0	-6.7
30-34	0.61	0.46	0.52	-24.6	13.0	-14.8	0.43	0.33	0.42	-23.3	27.3	-2.3
35-39	0.47	0.39	0.43	-17.0	10.3	-8.5	0·46	0.35	0.45	-23.9	28.6	-2.2
40-44	0.40	0.35	0.41	-12.5	17.1	2.5	0.46	0.35	0.54	-23.9	54.3	17.4
45-49	0.41	0.29	0.37	-29.3	27.6	-9.8	0.42	0.35	0.53	-16.7	51.4	26.2
50-54	0.38	0.26	0.36	-31.6	38.5	-5.3	0.38	0.34	0.62	10.5	82.4	63.2
55-59	0.35	0.25	0.34	-28.6	36.0	-2.9	0.41	0.31	0.55	-24.4	77.4	34.1
60+	0.39	0.30	0.43	-23.1	43.3	10.3	0.24	0.36	0.65	50.0	80.6	170.8
All ages*	0.40	0.28	0.33	-30.0	53.6	-7.5	0.34	0.28	0.42	-17.6	50.0	23.5

* In respect of population aged 10 years and above.
Source: Same as are those in Table 5.5.

Rural/Urban Difference

Table 5.9 presents data on marital distribution by age and sex and rural/urban residential background. An examination of the table shows that the proportion married for both males and females is higher in rural than in urban areas. And this holds true for all the census years for which relevant information is available. However, rural/ urban differences in the proportion married particularly for females are considerably reduced over the period from 1961 to 1981.

We also observe as being consistent with these findings a higher proportion of single people in urban than in rural areas for both males and females. And these findings still hold good even when allowance is made for the effect of the variation in age distribution over time and between rural and urban areas.

The mean age at marriage was also found to be higher in urban than in rural areas. The singulate mean age at marriage for females was estimated to be 17.1 and 18.5 years for rural and urban areas respectively in 1981. The corresponding figures for men were 20.6 and 22.5 for rural and urban areas respectively (see Table 5.10).

Table 5.9--Percentage distribution of population aged 10 years and above by marital status and sex, Nepal by rural and urban areas 1961-1981

Marital status by sex	1961						1981					
	Both Areas		Rural Areas		Urban areas		Both Areas		Rural Areas		Urban areas	
	Per cent	Standardized Percent*	Percent	Standardized Percent*	Per cent	Standardized Percent*	Percent	Standardized Percent*	Per cent	Standardized Percent*	Percent	Standardized Percent*
Both Sexes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never Married	21.6	22.4	21.4	22.1	28.4	30.3	29.3	29.3	28.9	28.9	36.0	34.7
Married	67.3	67.2	67.6	67.5	59.0	58.9	66.4	66.4	66.8	66.8	60.7	61.6
Widowed	9.6	10.0	9.6	10.0	9.4	10.3	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.0	3.4
Divorced/separated	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
Unknown	1.1	-	1.0	-	2.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Male	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never Married	28.5	28.8	28.2	28.4	34.2	36.3	35.1	35.1	34.6	34.7	41.8	40.7
Married	65.4	65.7	65.7	66.0	57.8	57.8	62.1	62.1	62.6	62.5	56.2	57.2
Widowed	4.8	5.1	4.8	5.2	4.8	5.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	1.7	1.8
Divorced/Separated	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
Unknown	1.0	-	0.9	-	2.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Female	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never Married	15.1	16.1	14.9	15.8	21.6	23.1	23.3	23.3	22.9	23.0	29.1	28.4
Married	69.2	69.5	69.5	69.8	60.4	61.3	70.8	70.8	71.2	71.1	65.9	65.9
Widowed	14.3	14.1	14.2	14.1	14.8	15.0	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	4.6	5.3
Divorced/Separated	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Unknown	1.1	-	1.1	-	2.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Standardized on the basis of 1981 population.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1968-Population Census 1961, Vol. III, Part VI, Table 8

,, ,, 1984-Population Census 1981, Vol. III, Table 13.

| | Mean Age at Marriage by sex | | | |
| | 1961 Census | | 1981 Census | |
	Males	Females	Males	Females
	6 years of age and over			
Nepal	19.4	15.1	21.8	17.1
Rural	19.3	15.1	20.5	16.8
Urban	22.0	17.5	22.4	18.5
	10 years of age and over			
Nepal	19.5	15.4	20.7	17.2
Rural	19.4	15.3	20.6	17.1
Urban	22.0	17.6	22.5	18.5

Source: Same as are those in table 5.9

Regional Difference : Ecological Zones

Table 5.11 and 5.12 present data on the distribution of ever and never married persons by ecological zones of the country. Confining the analysis to the standardized rates it may be observed that the proportion ever married is highest in the Terai and lowest in the Kathmandu Valley, while the Mountain and Hill hold the intermediary position. Conversely, the proportion of single people is predominant in the Kathmandu Valley followed by the Mountain, Hill and Terai.

The estimated singulate mean age at marriage is also found to be lowest in the Terai followed by the Hill and Mountain in 1981. The estimated singulate mean age at marriage for males was 21.8, 23.0 and 19.7 for the Mountain, Hill and Terai respectively in 1981. The corresponding figures for females were 18.5, 18.0 and 15.8 for the Mountain, Hill and Terai zones respectively. For the Kathmandu Valley the corresponding figures in 1981 were 22.0 and 18.8 for males and females respectively (see Table 5.13).

Table 5.11- Ever-married persons as proportion of total population 10 years of age and over and sex for different ecological zones Nepal, Census year 1981

| | Nepal | | Mountain | | Hills | | Kathmandu valley | | Terai | |
	Male	Females	Males	Female	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
10 -14	14.9	14.3	13.9	10.9	13.7	10.7	14.2	10.4	16.4	19.4
15 - 19	25.9	50.8	21.8	40.4	22.1	43.8	20.8	34.9	31.9	64.0
20-24	59.2	86.9	53.5	80.3	54.4	83.0	48.5	77.3	66.3	93.2
25-29	80.5	94.7	76.6	91.6	76.6	93.0	70.7	90.2	85.3	92.3
30-34	87.6	96.9	85.9	95.8	85.0	95.9	81.0	94.5	90.9	98.4
35-39	91.1	97.4	90.1	96.6	89.2	96.7	85.4	95.5	93.4	98.5
40-44	92.0	97.5	92.0	97.1	90.6	96.9	87.0	95.8	93.9	98.4
45-49	92.6	97.1	92.6	96.7	91.4	96.5	87.9	95.5	94.3	97.9
50-54	93.1	96.4	93.9	96.8	92.2	95.9	89.0	94.8	94.5	97.3
55-59	93.0	95.8	93.0	95.8	91.9	95.0	90.2	94.5	94.4	96.9
60-64	92.9	94.9	92.9	94.9	91.7	94.1	90.5	94.0	94.1	95.9
65+	91.6	92.9	91.7	92.9	90.5	91.9	89.9	91.3	92.9	94.1
All ages 10 years & over	64.9	76.7	63.9	74.5	61.6	73.6	59.2	70.6	68.9	81.2
Standardized 10 years & over	64.9	76.7	62.9	73.4	62.5	74.2	59.6	71.5	68.2	80.2

Source: Same as are those in Table 5.12

Table 5.12- Never-married persons as proportion of total population 10 years of age and over and sex for different ecological zones Nepal, Census year 1981

Age Group	Nepal		Mountain		Hills		Kathmandu valley		Terai	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
10-14	85.1	85.7	86.1	89.1	86.3	89.3	85.8	89.6	83.6	80.6
15 - 19	74.1	49.2	78.2	59.6	77.9	56.2	79.2	65.1	68.1	36.0
20-24	40.8	13.1	46.5	19.7	45.6	17	51.5	22.7	33.7	6.8
25-29	19.5	5.3	23.4	8.4	23.4	7.0	29.3	9.8	14.7	7.7
30-34	22.4	3.1	14.1	4.2	15.0	4.1	19.0	5.5	9.1	1.6
35-39	8.9	2.6	9.9	3.4	10.8	3.3	14.6	4.5	6.6	1.5
40-44	8.0	2.5	8.0	2.9	9.4	3.1	13.0	4.2	6.1	1.6
45-49	7.4	2.9	7.4	3.3	8.6	3.5	12.1	4.5	5.7	2.1
50-54	6.9	3.6	6.1	3.2	7.8	4.1	11.0	5.2	5.5	2.7
55-59	7.0	4.2	7.0	4.2	8.1	5.0	9.8	5.5	5.6	3.1
60-64	7.1	5.1	7.1	5.1	8.3	5.9	9.5	6.0	5.9	4.1
65+	8.4	7.1	8.3	7.1	9.5	8.1	10.1	8.7	7.1	5.9
All ages 10 years & over	35.1	23.3	36.1	25.5	38.4	26.4	40.8	29.4	31.1	18.8
Standardized 10 years & over	35.1	23.3	37.1	26.6	37.5	25.8	40.4	28.5	31.8	19.8

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984-Population Census 1981, Vol. 11, Table 15.

Table 5.13-Mean age at marriage for population aged 10 years and above by **sex far ecological zones, Nepal, Census years 1971-1981**

Year	Nepal		Mountain		Hill		Kathmandu Valley		Terai	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
1971	20.8	16.8	23.4	19.7	21.8	17.9	22.9	18.1	19.5	15.2
1981	20.7	17.2	21.8	18.5	23.0	18.0	22.0	18.8	19.7	15.8
Difference	-0.1	+0.4	-1.6	-1.2	+1.2	+0.1	-0.9	+ 0. 7	+0.2	+0.6

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975-Population Census 1971, Vol. Il, Part II, Table 15;
,,   ,,   1984-Population Census 1981, Vol. lI, Table 15.

Regional Difference : Development Regions

The marital structure and its changes over a period of time were also examined for the development regions. Table 5.14 and 5.15 present data on the distribution of ever and never married persons by development regions for the census year 1981. It maybe observed that the proportion of those ever married is highest in the Far-western Development region and lowest in the Eastern Development region. Conversely, the proportion of single people is highest in the Eastern Development region and lowest in the Far-western Development region. The Central Development

region occupies the second highest position in terms of the proportion of those ever married and second lowest position in terms of the proportion of those who have never married. The Western and Mid-western Development regions occupy the intermediary position. And this conclusion holds good for both males and females and for the and unstandardized rates.

When we look at changes in the marital

Table 5.14-Age-sex-specific proportion of ever married population aged 10 years and above by sex **for development regions, Nepal, Census year 1981**

Age group	Eastern Dev. Reg.		Central Dev. Reg.		Western Dev. Reg.		Mid-western Dev. Reg.		Far-Western Dev. Reg	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
10-14	10.51	11.55	14.60	15.78	17.94	15.37	16.84	13.45	19.30	17.36
15-19	19.74	42.35	27.11	54.32	26.89	50.29	29.37	52.38	32.41	63.66
20-24	54.01	84.05	61.31	88.73	57.58	86.09	63.28	87.76	64.42	89.67
25-29	81.12	94.75	81.75	95.39	77.78	94.00	80.00	94.20	80.12	93.84
30-34	89.67	97.35	88.34	97.29	85.34	96.54	86.58	96.42	85.83	96.15
35-39	93.0G	97.89	91.45	97.80	89.45	97.00	90.01	96.83	89.30	96.27
40-44	94.07	98.00	92.19	97.85	90.95	97.26	90.83	96.87	89.67	96.24
45-49	94.61	97.92	92.81	97.42	91.77	96.85	91.65	96.53	90.01	94.85
50-54	95.01	97.63	93.34	96.70	92.59	96.67	91.86	94.90	90.72	94.23
55-59	95.04	97.04	93.25	96.39	92.42	95.89	91.53	94.45	89.58	92.12
60+	94.55	95.70	92.62	94.21	91.29	93.46	90.52	91.83	88.52	89.78
All ages*	62.43	73.45	66.14	78.54	64.65	76.74	65.32	76.23	67.09	89.78
Std. rate**	63.80	75.22	65.57	77.88	64.48	76.51	65.53	76.39	65.88	78.12

 * In respect of population aged 10 years and above.

 **Standardized on the basis of the 1981 age distribution for the population of Nepal aged 10 years and above.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984 – Population Census 1981, Vol. II, Table 15.

Table 5.15-Age-sex-specific proportion of never married population aged 10 years and above by sex for development regions, Nepal, Census year 1981

Age-Group	Eastern Dev. Region		Central Dev. Region		Western Dev. Region		Mid-western Dev. Reg.		Far-western Dev. Reg.	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
10-14	89.49	88.85	85.40	84.22	82.06	84.63	83.16	86.55	80.70	82.64
15-19	80.26	57.65	72.89	45.68	73.11	49.71	70.63	47.62	67.59	36.34
20-24	45.99	15.95	38.69	11.27	42.42	13.91	36.72	12.24	35.58	10.33
25-29	18.88	5.25	18.25	4.61	22.22	6.00	20.00	5.80	19.88	6.16
30-34	10.33	2.65	11.66	2.71	14.66	3.46	13.42	3.58	14.17	3.85
35-39	6.94	2.11	8.55	2.20	10.55	3.00	9.99	3.17	10.70	3.73
40-44	5.93	2.00	7.81	2.15	9.05	2.74	9.17	3.13	10.33	3.76
45-49	5.39	2.08	7.19	2.58	8.23	3.15	8.35	3.47	9.99	5.15
50-54	4.99	2.37	6.66	3.30	7.41	3.33	8.14	5.10	9.28	5.77
55-59	4.96	2.96	6.75	3.61	7.58	4.11	8.47	5.55	10.42	7.88
60 +	5.45	4.30	7.38	5.79	8.71	6.54	9.48	8.17	11.48	10.22
All ages*	37.57	*26.55*	33.86	21.46	35.35	23.26	34.68	23.77	32.91	10.22
Std.rate**	36.20	24.78	34.43	22.12	35.52	23.49	34.47	23.61	34.12	21.83

 * In respect of population aged 10 years and above.

 **Standardized on the basis of the 1981 age distribution for the population of Nepal aged 10 years and above.

Source: Same as are those in Table 5.14.

distribution over a period of time, we find the proportion of those ever married has been declining with a corresponding increase in the proportion of single people in every region of the country during the intercensal period 1971-81. However, in this process of change the Mid-western Development region is lagging behind the other regions of the country. And this conclusion holds whether we measure this change by using standardized or unstandardized rates (see Table 5.16).

Table 5.16 --Percentage distribution of population aged 10 years and above by marital status and sex and by development regions, Nepal, Census years 1971-81

Sex	Region	Ever married*						Never married*					
		%		Standardized rate**			%			Standardized rate**			
		1971	1981	% Change	1971	1981	% Change	1971	1981	% Chang	1971	1981	% Chang
	Eastern	66.19	62.43	-5.7	67.26	63.80	-5.1	33.81	37.57	11.1	32.74	36.20	10.6
	Central	69.76	66.14	-5.2	68.86	65.57	-4.8	30.24	33.86	12.0	31.14	34.43	10.6
Males	Western	67.26	64.65	-3.9	67.72	64.48	-4.8	32.74	35.35	8.0	32.28	35.52	10.0
	Mid-western	67.31	65.32	-3.0	68.00	65.53	-3.6	32.69	34.88	6.1	32.00	34.47	7.7
	Far-western	69.79	67.09	-3.9	68.97	65.88	-4.5	30.91	32.91	8.9	31.03	34.12	10.0
	Eastern	77.88	73.45	-5.7	78.37	75.22	-4.0	22.12	26.55	20.0	21.63	24.78	14.6
	Central	82.43	78.54	-4.7	80.94	77.88	-3.8	17.57	21.46	22.1	19.06	22.12	16.1
Females	Western	80.44	76.44	-4.6	80.21	76.51	-4.6	19.56	23.26	18.9	19.79	23.49	18.7
	Mid-western	79.10	76.23	-3.6	78.93	76.39	-3.2	20.90	23.77	13.7	21.07	23.61	12.1
	Far-western	84.29	89.78	+6.5	82.54	78.12	-5.7	15.71	10.22	34.9	17.16	21.88	27.5

* In respect of population aged 10 years and above.

** Standardized on the basis of the 1981 age distribution for the population of Nepal aged 10 years and above.

Source: Same as are those in Table 5.14

The estimated singulate mean age at marriage in 1981 is found to be lowest for both men and women in the Far-western Development region, while this is found to be highest in the Eastern and Western Development regions for men[5] and women respectively (See Table 5.17). The estimated singulate mean age at marriage for males was 21.7, 20.5, 20.8, 20. 1 and 19.5 for the Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-western and Far-western Development regions respectively in 1981. The corresponding figures for females were

[5] An explanation for the finding of the highest age at marriage for males in the Eastern region can be traced to the heavy net exodus of male from this region (see Chapter vii: Internal Migration). Mobile men and women may find marriage as an impediment to their movement. Moreover, parents may find it difficult arrange for their children who are away from home. And this could delay the age at marriage.

16.9, 16.8,17.3,16.9 and 15.7 for the Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-western and Far-Western Development regions respectively. The development regions experienced little or no change in age at marriage during the decade of 1971 and 1981 (see Table 5.1*)*

Table 5.17-Mean (singulate) age at marriage for population 10 years and above by sex for development regions, Nepal Census years 1971-81

	Eastern development Region		Central development Region		Western development Region		Mid- western develo*pment region*		Far-western development region		Total (Nepal)	
	Males	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**
1971	21.3	17.4	20.5	16.4	21.0	16.7	20.4	17.0	20.6	*15.8*	20.8	16.8
1981	21.7	16.9	20.5	16.8	20.8	17.3	20.1	16.9	19.5	15.7	20.7	17.2
Difference	+ 0.4	-0.5	-	+0.4	-0.2	+0.6	-0.3	-0.1	-1.1	-0.1	-0.1	+0.4

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975-Population Census 1971, Vol. 11, Part II**,** Table 15:

,,   ,,   1984,   ,,   1981, Vol. II, Table 15.

District Level Variation

We have so far presented data on age at marriage at the national and regional level. However, this data at aggregate level may conceal variation in mean age at marriage within the country and also within a region. What is true for the country or for a region may not be true for its constituents. In order to get a clue to this variation we have calculated the mean age at marriage at the district level. Analysis of variation in mean age at marriage at district level may also help us to identify factors affecting Nuptiality more appropriately, by relating the characteristics of a district to its level of Nuptiality. Tables 5.18 and 5.19 present data on the singulate mean age at marriage by district for female and male respectively for the year 1981. The singulate mean age at marriage for male is found to be highest in *Mustang* and lowest *in Saptari* districts, while the female age at marriage is found to be highest in Manang and lowest in *Parsa* districts. An indepth analysis of socio-economic characteristics of the districts of *Mustang* and *Manang* on the one hand and *Saptari* and *Parsa* on the other, could provide an insight to the factors affecting high and low Nuptiality, at least at the district level. And this could form the basis of formulating appropriate policies affecting Nuptiality. Some analysis of the factors affecting variations in age at marriage at district level have also been attempted in this chapter and were presented in the section *Correlates of Nuptiality.*

Table 5.18—Mean age at marriage (female) and rank order for 75 districts, Nepal, Census year 1981

Districts	Mean age at marriage	Rank order of mean age at marriage	Districts	Mean age at marriage	Rank order of mean age at marriage
Manang	24.5	1	Chitwan	17.5	39.5
Mustang	22.7	2	Dhading	17.5	39.5
Solukhumbu	20.9	3	DangDeukhuri	17.4	42.5
Dolpa	20.7	4	Gulmi	17.4	42.5
Ilam	20.5	5	Sunsari	17.4	42.5
Dhankuta	20.2	6	Syangja	17.4	42.5
Panchthar	20.1	7.5	Makawanpur	17.3	45.5
Sankhuwasahha	20.1	7.5	Pyuthan	17.3	45.5
Bhojpur	20.0	9	Bajura	17.1	47
Tehrathum	19.7	10	Arghakhanchi	16.9	48.5
Taplejung	19.6	11	Jajarkot	16.9	48.5
Khotang	19.5	12.5	Surkhet	16.8	50
Myagdi	19.5	12.5	Achham	16.7	51
Dolakha	19.3	15	Doti	16.3	52.5
Humla	19.3	15	Jumla	16.3	52.5
Rasuwa	19.3	15	Banke	16.2	55
Lamjung	19.2	17	Darchula	16.2	55
Kathmandu	18.9	18.5	Nawalparasi	16.2	55
Okhaldhunga	18.9	18.5	Kailali	16.1	57
Lalitpur	18.7	20.5	Dailekh	16.0	58.5
Ramechhap	18.7	20.5	Kalikot	16.0	58.5
Baglung	18.4	22.5	Bajhang	15.7	60
Kaski	18.4	22.5	Dadeldhura	15.6	61.5
Bhaktapur	18.3	25	Salyan	15.6	61.5
Parbat	18.3	25	Bardiya	15.5	63
Rolpa	18.3	25	Sarlahi	15.4	64
Jhapa	18.2	27	Rupandehi	15.1	65
Udayapur	18.1	28	Baitadi	14.9	66.5
Nuwakot	18.0	30	Bara	14.9	66.5
Sindhuli	18.0	30	Dhanusha	14.6	68.5
Sindhupalchok	18.0	30	Kapilbastu	14.6	68.5
Gorkha	17.8	34	Rautahat	14.5	70
Morang	17.8	34	Saptari	14.3	71.5
Palpa	17.8	34	Siraha	14.3	71.5
Rukum	17.8	34	Kanchanpur	14.2	73
Tanahun	17.8	34	Mahottari	13.7	74.5
Kavrepalanchok	17.7	37	Parsa	13.7	74.5
Mugu	17.6	38			

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984-Population Census 1981, Vol. I, Part IV, Table 16.

Table 5.19-Mean age at marriage (male) and rank order for 75 districts, Nepal, Census year 1981

Districts	Mean age at marriage	Rank order of mean age at marriage	Districts	Mean age at marriage	Rank order of mean age at marriage
Mustang	25.8	1	Kavrepalanchok	21.2	38.5
Manang	25.4	2	Mugu	21.1	40
IIam	24.2	3	Myagdi	21.0	41.5
Solukhumbu	23.9	4	Sunsari	21.0	41.5
Sankhuwasahha	23.5	5	Banke	20.9	43.5
Bhojpur	23.4	7	Rukum	20.9	43.5
Humla	23.4	7	Dangdeukhuri	20.6	45
Taplejung	23.4	7	Doti	20.4	46.5
Dhankuta	23.3	9	Makawanpur	20.4	46.5
Tehrathum	23.1	10	Rolpa	20.3	48
Dolpa	23.0	11.5	Pyuthan	20.1	49
Khotang	23.0	11.5	Baitadi	20.0	50
Rasuwa	22.9	13	Nawalparasi	19.9	51
Jhapa	22.8	14.5	Dadeldhura	19.8	52.5
Panchthar	22.8	14.5	Kailali	19.8	52.5
Dolakha	22.7	16.5	Darchula	19.7	54.5
Parbat	22.7	16.5	Kalikot	19.7	54.5
Kaski	22.6	18	Jumla	19.6	56
Kathmandu	22.4	19	Achham	19.5	58
Baglung	22.3	21	Bajura	19.5	58
Lamjung	22.3	21	Dailekh	19.5	58
Nuwakot	22.3	21	Sarlahi	19.4	60
Palpa	22.2	23	Bardiya	19.1	61.5
Morang	21.9	24	Surkhet	19.1	61.5
Okhaldhunga	21.8	25	Bajhang	19.0	63
Lalitpur	21.7	26.5	Jajarkot	18.9	64
Ramechhap	21.7	26.5	Bara	18.7	66
Arghakhanchi	21.6	30.5	Rautahat	18.7	66
Chitwan	21.6	30.5	Salyan	18.7	66
Dhading	21.6	30.5	Mahottari	18.6	68
Gulmi	21.6	30.5	Siraha	18.5	69
Sindhuli	21.6	30.5	Dhanusha	18.4	70.5
Udayapur	21.6	30.5	Kanchanpur	18.4	70.5
Sindhupalchok	21.5	34	Rupandehi	18.1	72
Tanahun	21.4	35	Parsa	18.0	73
Gorkha	21.3	36.5	Kapilbastu	17.9	74
Syangja	21.3	36.5	Saptari	17.7	75
Bhaktapur	21.2	38.5			

Source: Same as are those in Table 5.18.

Nuptiality Indexes

Various other summary indexes of nuptiality have been calculated from census data to measure the changing pattern of nuptiality over a period of time and also to show interregional differences in marriage patterns in Nepal. The indexes include the proportion married (I_m), the proportion single (I_s), the proportion divorced (I_d), the proportion separated (I_p) and the proportion widowed(I_w). These indexes (I_s, I_d, I_p, I_w are the components of the reciprocal of the index proportion of women married (I_m). The index I_m (proportion of women married) was originally developed by Coale (1970)[6] at Princeton University. Hull and Saladi (1977)[7] in an attempt to broaden the use of the marriage index (I_m) decomposed its reciprocal into separate indexes. And the procedures employed to calculate these indexes were the same as those described by Coale.)

These indexes indicate the distribution of women of reproductive age of various marital status which are weighted according to the Hutterite schedule of age specific fertility which is meant to represent an approximate weighting for potential fecundity patterns (Hull and Saladi, 1977). In other words, these indexes reflect not only the marriage pattern of women but also their marital status with regard to its potential effect on fertility. For example, the index proportion divorced (I_d) will be inflated if these women are predominantly young (and presumably fecund). That is to say-what would be the potential effect of divorce on reducing fertility, if it is among younger rather than older women.

The coefficients of these indexes are presented in Table 5.20. That marriage is universal in Nepal is once again demonstrated by data in Table 5.20. It shows that at least 85 percent of women of presumed reproductive potential are currently married. In other words, 85 per cent of the reproductive potential is realized through the present marriage pattern assuming few or no births outside legal marriage. About 13 per cent of potential fertility is reduced because of the fact that not all women are married but approximately 13 per cent are still single. The remaining 2 per cent of the reduction is attributed to the dissolution of marriage. Among the indexes of marriage dissolution the index of widowhood is consistently higher than the proportion divorced.

However, it should be noted here that even though more than three-quarters of women of presumed reproductive potential are currently married, the Im has been falling slowly but consistently over the years from 0.884 in 1961 to 0.854 in 1981. The falling Im is the result of rising Is which is counteracted to some extent by decreasing widowhood, i. e. Iw . The proportion of single people (Is) has increased by 125 per cent from 0.056 in 1961 to 0.126 in 1981, while the proportion widowed (Iw) declined by 71 per cent from 0.056 in 1961 to 0.016 in 1981. Even though the decline of Iw falls short of the increase in Is, the former is likely to dampen some what the potential fertility control effects of the rapidly rising Is .

The changing pattern of marriage as observed above for the country as a whole also holds good for different regions of the country, although there are some interesting regional variations in these patterns.

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[6] Coale, Ansley J. 1970. "The Decline in Fertility in Europe from the French Revolution to World War II", in Behrman S. J. et. al., Fertility and Family Planning: A World View; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

[7] Hull, T. and Saladi, R. 1977. "The Application of Hutterite Fertility-Weighted Indexes to Studies of Changing Marriage Patterns", Working paper No. 33, Population Institute, Gadjah Marda University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia August 1977.

Table 5.20 Marital Status indexes for the whole kingdom by development region, ecological zones and rural urban areas, Nepal, Census years 1961 - 1981

Region, zone and rural/urban areas	Year	Marital Status indexes				
		Proportion Single I_s	Proportions I_m	Proportions divorced/Seperated $I_d + I_p$	Proportions Widowed I_w	Proportions not currently married I_u
	1961	0.056	0.884	0.004	0.056	0.116
Nepal	1971	0.085	0.881	0.003	0.031	0.119
	1981	0.126	0.854	0.004	0.016	0.146
Eastern Dev. Reg.	1971	0.105	0.860	0.003	0.032	0.140
	1981	0.151	0.827	0.005	0.017	0.173
Central Dev. Reg.	1971	0.077	0.890	0.003	0.030	0.110
	1981	0.111	0.868	0.004	0.017	0.132
Western Dev. Reg.	1971	0.089	0.876	0.004	0.031	0.124
	1981	0.133	0.848	0.004	0.015	0.152
Mid Western Dev. Reg.	1971	0.087	0.877	0.005	0.031	0.125
	1981	0.124	0.854	0.005	0.017	0.146
Far Western Dev. Reg.	1971	0.052	0.917	0.002	0.029	0.083
	1981	0.102	0.881	0.002	0.015	0.119
Mountain	1981	0.168	0.808	0.006	0.018	0.192
Hill	1981	0.163	0.817	0.005	0.015	0.183
Terai	1981	0.076	0.903	0.003	0.018	0.097
Rural	1961	0.053	0.886	0.004	0.057	0.114
	1981	0.122	0.857	0.004	0.017	0.143
Urban	1961	0.128	0.807	0.008	0.057	0.193
	1981	0.189	0.795	0.003	0.013	0.205

Note : - The formula for these estimates are as follows.

$$I_s = \sum_i F_i s_i / \sum_i F_i W_i \;\; ; \;\; I_d = \sum_i F_i d_i / \sum_i F_i W_i \;\; ; \;\; I_w = \sum_i F_i w_i / \sum_i F_i W_i$$

$$I_p = \sum_i F_i p_i / \sum_i F_i W_i \;\; ; \;\; I_m = \sum_i F_i m_i / \sum_i F_i W_i$$

Where F_i = Hutterite age specific (15 – 49 year)fertility

S_i = Number (age specific) of single women

W_i = Number (age specific) of women irrespective of marital status

d_i = Number (age specific) of divorced women

w_i = Number (age specific) of widowed women

P_i = Number (age specific) of separated women

m_i = Number (age specific) of married women

Source : - Same as are those in Table 5.14

Variation in Nuptiality Indexes: Development Regions

It may be observed from Table 5.20 that the proportion of single people (I_s) ranges from 0.151 in the Eastern Development region to 0.102 in the Far-western Development region, indicating some alternative patterns of delayed marriage existing in Nepal. The proportion divorced/separated (I_d+ I_p) constitute a very small fraction of women who have ever-married. It never reaches beyond 0.005 and there shows no trend over the years. The Eastern Development region and Mid-western Development region share the high index of 0.005 while the Far-western Development region has an index of only 0.002. There is hardly any noticeable difference among the regions with respect to proportions widowed (I_w,). The value of I_w varies between 0.017 in the Eastern, Central and Mid-western Development regions to 0.015 in the Western and Far-western Development regions. However, there is good deal of variation among regions with respect to proportions currently married The values of I_m range from a low 0.827 in the Eastern Development region to high 0.881 in Far-western Development region. The data shows that more than three quarters of women of presumed reproductive potential are currently married in each region.

Variation in Nuptiality Indexes: Geographic Zones

The data shows a good deal of variation in the marital pattern by geographic zones. For example, the proportion married (I_m) ranges from a low 0.808 in the Mountain to a high 0.903 in the Terai. The Hill occupies the intermediary position. Conversely, the proportion single (I_s) in the Mountain is 121 per cent higher than that of the corresponding proportion in the Terai. The value of I_s ranges form 0.168 in the

Mountain to 0.163 and 0.076 in the Hill and Terai respectively.

The values of I_d (prportions divorced/separated) are consistently lower than those of the values of I_w (proportion widowed) in each zone. And there is hardly any significant geographical variation in these indexes.

Rural/Urban Differences in Nuptiaiity Indexes

There is also a good deal of variation in the Nuptiality pattern, at least with respect to the indexes of the proportion married (Im) and the proportion single (I_s) between rural and urban areas (see Table 5.20), The proportion married is higiher in rural than in urban areas. The value of I,,, varies from a high 0.857 in rural area to a low 0.795 in urban area. Conversely, the proportion single in urban area exceeds that of rural area by 55 per cent. This value (I_5) ranges from 0.189 in urban area to 0.122 in rural area. The proportion widowed (I_w) is slightly higher in rural than in urban area reflecting a differential in the mortality pattern[8]. There is no rural/ urban difference in regard to the proportion divorced/separated. It is also interesting to observe here that the major rural / urban difference regarding the proportions of married and single people, are narrowing over the years.

An examination of these nuptiality indexes clearly show substantial differences in marriage patterns between regions/zones and rural/urban areas, particularly with respect to delaying marriage (I_s).

In order to measure the changing pattern of nuptiatity over a period of time, Coale's model for first marriage was also employed.

The Coale Model For First Marriage

In 1971, Coale[9] examined the evolution

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[8] This could also be due to differential age distribution between rural/urban areas.

[9] Coale, Ansley J. 1971, "Age Pattern of Marriage", Population Studies, Vol.25, No. 2, July 1971, pp. 193-208

of the risk of marriage with age in specific cohorts using a double exponential so that the model could be determined by three parameters:

a_o = the earliest age at which a significant number of marriages has taken place.

k= the time scale during which first marriages take place; when k = 1.0 the first marriages will be spread out over a range of 40 years, so that a woman who reaches the age of a_o+40 without ever having married is unlikely to do so. When k is less than or greater than 1.0, this period of 40 years is reduced or extended proportionately;

c = the proportion ever married when first marriages have effectively ceased and is thus the ultimate proportion ever married.

The value of these parameters for the female were calculated by employing the census data of 1971 and 1981. And this data is presented in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21-Coale's nuptiality parameters (females) for 1971 and 1981 censuses

Area	1971			1981		
	a_o	k	c	a_o	k	c
NEPAL	12.02	0.450	0.985	12.18	0.491	0.9615
Rural/Urban						
Rural				12.23	0.479	0.9622
Urban				11.53	0.643	0.9464
Ecological zones						
Mountain	11.86	0.526	0.9685	12.25	0.571	0.9497
Hill	12.21	0.468	0.9775	12.34	0.541	0.9546
Terai	11.62	0.360	0.9904	12.18	0.399	0.9757
Development Reg.						
Eastern	12.13	0.477	0.9817	12.53	0.600	0.9611
Central	11.83	0.432	0.9782	12.15	0.467	0.9641
Western	11.89	0.451	0.9820	12.09	0.502	0.9564
Mid-western	12.81	0.385	0.9786	12.41	0.453	0.9529
Far-western	11.93	0.367	0.9899	11.67	0.427	0.9405

There has been a small but positive shift in the age at which a significant number of marriages takes place (a_o). This shift is noted in every zone and region of the country particularly in the Terai. It also shows an expansion of the period in which the marriages take place (k), from 0.450 in 1971 to 0.491 in 1981indicating a change in the pace of marriage, The expansion in k values is also noted in every zone and region of the country. These findings suggest that the initial age at which marriage takes place has risen and at the same time they are being distributed over a wider range. These changes, although very small, indicate some structural shift in the marriage pattern. Another interesting finding is that the 'c' value, although it remained, very high, showed a decline over the years in every zone and region of the country. It indicates that, although marriage is still universal in Nepal, the (ultimate) proportion who have been married once is declining over the years.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENTIALS IN MARRIAGE

In this section, the effect of socio-economic and demographic factors on marriage will be examined. The socio-economic and demographic variables included are as follows: i) literacy and level of education; ii) occupation, and iii) religion. The investigation regarding the marital status includes the following aspects: i) singulate mean age of marriage, ii) proportion never married in the young and older age groups for both male and female. The relationship between socio-economic characteristics and marital status is examined by employing census data of 1981. However, it should be pointed out here that the census data is not really ideal to examine the above relationships for the following reasons: socioeconomic status covering education and occupation may change during one's life time. From the census data it is not possible to

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114

know whether the gaining of such a status occurred when men and women studied while still single or after they were married. Therefore, the results observed between socio-economic characteristics and marital status should be interpreted with caution. Moreover, it should be also borne in mind that it is not the socio-economic characteristics alone that affect marital status, the latter also affects the former, i. e. marital status may also affect the socio-economic position of a person. For example, a woman who was economically dependent while being married could actively participate in a gainful activity outside home, following the death of her husband or being divorced /separated, for economic reasons. It shows that there exists a two-way causation between socio-economic characteristics and marital status. And, therefore, the interpretation of the `causal' association between these characteristics and marital status should be handled with caution.

The expected relationship between each of the socio-economic characteristics and aspects of marital status, included in the present analysis, are discussed below:

Education and Age at Marriage

One would expect to find a positive association between educational attainment and literacy on the one hand and age at marriage on the other. A positive effect of educational attainment and literacy on age at marriage consistently found in many countries[10]. There are several mechanisms through which education may positively effect the age at marriage: i) education kindles higher aspirations and also provides

important avenues to upper mobility in modern societies. Educated boys and girls may consider early marriage as an obstacle to achieving social and economic mobility and therefore, may postpone their marriages until they have a permanent source of income and a good standard of living. And this process could delay the age at marriage of educated boys and girls; ii) formal education leading to a degree takes a longtime and this could also involuntarily delay the age at marriage; iii) educated girls out of their own volition may join market activities outside the home to explore their talent. And employment outside the home may foster interests in non-familial activities which may compete with marriage and consequently lead to a postponement of marriage.

Occupation

An occupation reflects one's socio-economic status which is found to be closely associated with Nuptiality behavior. One may identify several mechanisms through which occupation may be related to Nuptiality behavior. Some of these mechanisms are as follows: i) employment outside the home may provide companionship, recreation, stimulation, creative activity, and social and economic rewards, which may well compete with marriage and consequently lead to delayed marriage. One would, therefore, expect to find a higher age at marriage for those who are engaged in market activities outside the home than for those who arc involved with activities performed within the home, i. e. domestic activities; ii) an occupation of a higher status also calls for a higher (formal) level of education which requires prolonged training and this could consequently lead to delayed marriage, iii) certain occupations although not regarded as of high status may discourage

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[10] Smith found a difference of approximately five years between the age of marriage of women with no schooling and those who attain a high level of education, among many Countries in Asia (see, Smith, Peter C.1976, "Asian Nuptiality in Transition", paper presented at the Seventh Summer Seminar in Population, East-west Population Institute, Honolulu, June (1977).

early family building because of nature of work. And this may also lead to delayed marriage.

Religion

Marriage is an important social institution which is related to traditions and customs. And traditions and customs of people are greatly influenced by religion. It is, therefore, appropriate to investigate the effect of religion on timing and extent of marriage. One comprehensive study examining religious orientation and Nuptiality in Asia concluded that, "religions differences cannot be readily dismissed as merely the reflection of differences in socio-economic composition" (Smith, 1976). In other words, religion has an independent effect on Nuptiality.

In this study, the effect of religion on Nuptiality is examined among three religious communities-Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. The Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims accounted for 89.0,7.5 and 3.0 per cent of the population of Nepal in 1981. In a situation where one religious community is overwhelmingly numerically superior, the study of the effect of other religions besides the dominant one on Nuptiality is difficult to undertake unless one has access to a large set of data. Census data as employed here, therefore, provides an ideal opportunity to study the effect of religion on Nuptiality for Nepal meaningfully, since it contains a large number of cases allowing for sufficient variation among religious groups.

RESULTS

Literacy and Nuptiality

The effects of literacy and educational attainment on marital statuses are shown **in** Table 5.22

Table 5.22-Per cent of men and women never married and singulate mean age at first marriage by level of literacy and educational attainment, Nepal, Census year 1981.

Age-group	Total Illiterate		Total Literate		No Schooling		Primary		Lower Secondary		Secondary and above	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
10-14	80.40	83.63	80.07	84.29	90.56	93.04	90.51	93.67	89.64	93.57	86.10	82.80
15-19	68.16	45.26	70.89	52.75	81.11	63.63	83.15	73.90	81.82	79.95	81.07	77.71
20-24	37.62	11.45	38.60	18.83	43.79	18.49	41.68	16.87	46.45	32.48	56.41	45.07
25-29	18.77	4.77	17.58	9.06	22.39	8.87	17.51	5.89	19.20	11.38	26.37	19.90
30-34	12.02	2.83	10.65	5.63	16.40	5.03	12.14	4.03	12.12	6.17	14.15	11.54
35-39	8.43	2.45	7.69	4.97	14.45	4.56	10.61	4.52	9.52	5.04	10.73	10.24
40-45	7.59	2.39	6.01	4.86	13.96	4.47	11 .78	4.72	9.37	5.06	9.80	8.17
45-49	6.94	2.80	6.13	5.29	14.11	5.29	10.77	4.89	8.89	4.84	9.28	10.68
50-54	6.44	3.38	6.09	6.73	13.41	7.48	13.18	11.11	10.25	8.71	9.61	14.41
55-59	6.66	3.98	5.91	7.71	13.95	9.14	9.98	9.03	9.18	13.17	9.23	18.02
60+	7.41	5.94	6.71	11.68	16.34	15.17	14.71	20.70	11.22	15.75	10.43	19.25
Total	27.85	19.92	22.86	27.74	63.93	57 56	62.60	62.33	47.31	50.11	34.72	37.71
Standardized for age	32.88	22.11	32.79	26.18	40.55	29.03	38.70	30.33	38-.26	33.72	39.74	36.72
Singulate mean age at marriage	20. 00	16. 75	20.10	17. 32	20.82	18. 13	20.36	17.85	21.08	19. 88	22.05	19.47
Male female difference	3.25		2.78		2.69		2.51		1.20		2.58	

*Standardized on the basis of 1981 population.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Population Census 1981, Unpublished special tabulations.

11. Smith, Peter C. 1976, op. cit.

It may be observed that literate men and women, particularly the latter have a higher singulate mean age at marriage than their illiterate counterparts. For men the singulate mean age at marriage is 20.10 for the literate and 20.0 for the illiterate; the corresponding figures for women are 17.32 and 16.75 respectively. It may be further observed that the standardized proportion of single people among the literate men and their illiterate counterparts is almost the same. However, this proportion (i. e. the standardized proportion of single people) among the literate women is at least 4 percentage points higher than for their illiterate counterparts. From the preceding findings it may be noted that the differences in the Nuptiality pattern observed between literate men and their illiterate counterparts are less marked when compared to those observed between literate women and their illiterate counterparts. It indicates that literacy seems to affect female Nuptiality more strongly than men's.

Educational Attainment and Age at Marriage

There is a discontinuous relationship between the level of education and Nuptiality (see Table 5.22). The singulate mean age of marriage declines, although not significantly, from no formal education category to primary level, for both men and women. However, the mean age at marriage rises substantially beyond the primary education level for both men and women. For men the age at marriage rises from 20 for those with primary education to 21 and 22 for those who completed lower secondary and secondary and higher secondary level education respectively. The female age at marriage rises sharply by two years from 17.85 at primary level to 19.88 at the lower secondary level and thereafter, it tapers off slightly. The moderate decline in female age at marriage from lower secondary level

to secondary and higher level may be attributed to the chance factor only resulting from the small number of cases in the highest education category. There were only very few women who have completed secondary and higher level of education in 1981.

The standardized proportion of single people among males hardly varies with the level of education, however, this proportion rises sharply with the level of education among women. The standardized proportion of single people among women rises from 29 per cent for those with no schooling to 37 per cent for those who have completed education at secondary level and above. Celibacy, i. e. the proportion of single people at ages 40-44, among women also rises with the level of education from 5 per cent for those with no schooling to 8 per cent for those who have completed secondary level education and above.

The difference between men and women in age at marriage decreases gradually from 2.69 years for the no education group to 1.20 years for those with lower secondary education and then it rises further to 2.58 years for the secondary and higher educated group. This unexpected rise in male-female difference in age at marriage at the higher level of education (i. e. secondary and above) is due to the increase in the age at marriage of the male by one year without a corresponding increase of the female age at marriage from lower secondary to secondary and higher level.

An important conclusion one draws from the above findings is that the effect of education on age at marriage is greatest beyond the primary level. And this is also supported in other studies conducted in Asia (see, Smith, 1976)[12]

Utilizing census data of 1981 we also found that the level of education of a single woman is considerably higher on an average than

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[12] Smith, Peter C., *op. cit.*

that of the level of education of a woman

who has married once. And this finding holds good for both rural and urban areas (see Table 5.23). These results though based on bivariate level imply that enhancement of education will lead to a higher age at marriage by postponing or delaying marriage.

Table 5.23 -Average level of education of ever-married and never-married women 10 years of age and over, by rural-urban background, Nepal, Census year 1981

	All Nepal		Rural Area		Urban Area	
	Ever married	Never married	Ever married	Never married	Ever married	Never married
Average level of education*	0.17	0.57	0.13	0.46	0.81	**1.93**

* The following weights are used while calculating average level of education: Illiterate=0; No schooling= School-2; Lower Secondary-3; Secondary=4; S. L. C. & Equivalent=5; Intermediate & equivalent=6 and Graduate & equivalent and above=7.

Occupation and age at Marriage

The effect of one's occupational position on one's marital status is shown in Table 5.24. It may be observed that the singulate mean age at marriage for a female is lowest among the farm workers (17) followed by the production workers (18). Women who were classified as administrative and clerical workers had the highest age at marriage. Women who held professional occupations also married at the high age of 20. The age at marriage of female sales and service workers is in the intermediate group. For men the marriage *age* is lowest among the professional workers followed by the clerical workers. Men who are characterized in the service, sales and administrative group had the highest age at marriage. Men who were production and farm workers married at intermediate ages.

For women celibacy, i.e. proportion of single women at age 40-44 and the overall percentage of those who have never married standardized for age is highest among the administrative workers followed by clerical and professional workers. Women engaged in production work are characterized by the lowest celibacy rate and percentage of those never married. For men celibacy is found to be highest among the professional and administrative workers, while the percentage never married is highest among the service and professional workers. Men engaged in sales and production work are characterized by the lowest celibacy rate, while the lowest percentage of male who have never married comes from clerical and production workers.

It is also worth nothing that the difference between men and women in age at marriage is at least two years in favour of the male, among farm, service and production workers, the highest being nearly three years among the farm workers. However, the reverse is true among the professional, administrative and clerical workers. In these occupations women tend to marry slightly later than their male counterparts, i.e. the singulate mean age at marriage for women is higher than their male counterparts in these occupations.

Table 5.24-Per cent of men and women never married and singulate mean age at first marriage by major occupation groups, Nepal, Census year 1981

Age	Professional workers		Administrative workers		Clerical workers		Sales workers		Service workers		Farm workers		Production workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
10-14	81.22	89.69	60.00	100.00	78.36	82.61	88.01	86.06	85.75	90.38	79.51	82.43	87.40	86.25
15-19	68.20	59.06	71.93	52.38	63.08	64.10	73.06	55.05	76.46	60.61	68.56	51.42	68.82	52.94
20-24	36.49	36.77	47.24	32.50	36.73	39.09	36.53	18.83	42.02	20.25	37.41	16.75	32.99	15.99
25-29	17.04	21.35	25.30	33.33	15.82	21.55	14.33	7.03	15.93	15.56	18.44	7.91	12.73	5.25
30-34	9.81	11.01	12.21	13.92	8.20	14.61	7.77	3.83	8.36	3.72	11.93	4.95	7.22	2.57
35-39	8.36	9.71	8.45	12.50	6.57	11.16	5.43	3.51	7.60	7.69	8.48	4.29	5.12	4.19
40-44	9.19	6.17	8.21	6.90	6.07	8.39	4.98	3.20	7.79	6.04	7.78	4.08	4.88	2.05
45-49	9.27	6.56	6.83	13.33	5.43	16.25	3.95	3.07	5.87	5.51	7.50	4.95	3.82	1.85
50-54	9.78	7.84	6.39	7.14	4.29	2.94	4.07	2.12	6.33	9.35	7.05	5.92	3.97	2.41
55-59	10.15	4.31	3.68	0.00	3.84	0.00	4.56	2.14	8.13	12.00	7.33	7.33	3.52	2.55
60+	11.07	10.10	9.93	23.08	4.91	11.11	3.79	3.50	6.40	12.21	9.64	12.30	4.19	3.58
Total	19.73	28.65	15.46	23.30	18.79	27.40	15.34	13.91	24.05	29.07	29.59	27.42	20.83	19.82
Standardized for age* 33.37	32.57	31.87	35.95	30.34	33.34	32.71	24.91	34.60	29.47	33.00	25.11	31.38	23.90	
Singulate mean age at 19.03 marriage	19.84	20.03	20.19	19.53	20.01	20.52	18.20	20.70	18.12	19.78	17.05	19.98	17.87	
Male Female Difference	-0.81		-0.16		-0.48		2.32		2.58		2.73		2.11	

*Standardized on the basis of 1981 population.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984-Population Census 1981, Vol. 1, Part VII, Table 30.

Religion and Age at Marriage

Data in Table 5.25 shows that the singulate mean age of marriage is highest for Buddhists and lowest for Muslims. Christians married at intermediate ages. The average age at marriage for Buddhist men and women was 21.80 and 18.86 years respectively. The corresponding figures for Hindu men and women were 20.85 and 17.24 years respectively. Muslim women tend to marry on average 2.5 to 4 years earlier than their Hindu and Buddhist counterparts. The average age at marriage for Muslim men is, on the other hand, about 2.38 to 3 years lower than that of the other two religions. Muslim women married on average at age 14.75 and men at 18.58.

The variation in the proportion of those who have never married (standardized for age) by religion follows the same pattern as that which is observed in the examination of the singulate mean age at marriage. The percentage of those who have never married, standardized for age, is found to be highest

among Buddhists followed by Hindus and Muslims.

The gap between the male and female singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) is highest among Muslims followed by Hindus and Buddhists. Buddhist women were 2.94 years younger than their husbands at the time

among Buddhists followed by Hindus and of their first marriage. These figures were 3.61 and 3.83 for Hindus and Muslims respectively. That the timing and extent of marriage is highest among Muslims compared to other religions is also corroborated in other studies conducted in the India-Bangladesh-Pakistan sub-continent (see, Chaudhary, 1983)[13].

Table 5.25-Per cent of men and women never married and singulate mean age at first marriage by major religions, Nepal; Census year 1981

Religion

Age-gro up	Hindu		Buddhist		Jain		Muslim		Christian	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
10-14	85.61	86.32	87.77	90.18	72.45	75.54	80.07	71.54	83.60	88.95
15-19	74.71	48.95	79.07	63.15	69.64	38.89	59.08	22.37	71.61	59.12
20-24	41.13	12.51	46.27	21.51	57.53	12.45	24.51	3.83	48.30	23.44
25-29	19.52	4.89	22.80	8.57	28.33	6.94	10.19	1.71	29.27	11.48
30-34	12.34	2.72	13.28	4.51	23.73	3.45	6.07	0.84	16.67	5.36
35-39	8.91	2.26	9.41	3.52	19.73	3.50	4.26	0.91	16.50	6.54
40-44	8.04	2.19	7.74	2.92	17.07	5.88	3.79	0.83	15.07	-
45-49	7.28	2.46	6.85	2.91	20.81	5.88	3.04	1.20	8.43	5.48
50-54	6.62	2.86	6.33	3.51	17.45	3.62	3.12	1.14	11.86	14.55
55-59	6.78	3.46	6.30	3.61	10.31	10.84	3.49	2.01	11.63	6.67
60+	7.14	4.96	6.18	5.36	17.79	9.66	2.97	2.48	12.64	10.39
Total	35.50	23.16	36.76	27.05	39.53	18.51	24.77	13.20	40.51	28.14
Standardized for age*	35.22	22.96	37.07	27.38	40.16	21.56	27.15	15.06	38.86	28.60
Singulate mean age at marriage	20.85	17.24	21.80	18.86	19.66	16.01	18.58	14.75	21.59	16.68
Male female Difference	3.61		2.94		3.65		3.83		4.91	

* Standardized on the basis of 1981 population.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Population Census 1981, Unpublished special tabulations

THE EFFECT OF MARITAL STABILITY ON FERTILITY

Nuptiality patterns are considered to be important determinants of fertility. It is not

only the timing and tempo of first marriage and celibacy but also the extent of broken marriages such as widowhood, divorce and

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13. Chaudhury, R. H. 1983. *Social Aspects of Fertitity with Special Reference to Developing Countries*. New Delhi, Vikas Publishing house Pvt. Ltd.

separation constitute significant intermediate variables affecting the time span of the reproductive process and indirectly fertility behavior (Davis and Blake, 1956)[14].

An attempt is made here to examine the extent of these effects of marital status on 'ever-marital' fertility in Nepal. This was examined only with respect to cumulative aspects of the reproductive behavior, i.e. the number of children ever born alive. The data employed here to examine the above relationship is that collected by the 1981 census.

Before the data is discussed a few words of caution are in order particularly with respect to our measure of the dependent variable, i.e. number of children ever born. The number of children ever born reported in the census is grossly understated largely because of recall lapse. This is likely to vary with the level of education, age and other factors. We have no means of estimating the level of understatement or its differential impact. However, there is no evidence to show that this under-enumeration varies by marital status. Therefore, the variation in fertility by marital status, if there is any, is not likely to be the result of the differential reporting of the number of children by marital status.

Table 5.26 presents data on the number of children ever born alive per 1000 ever married women by age and marital status.

An examination of the data shows a variation in fertility by marital status. The fertility of currently married women is higher than that of women whose marriage was disrupted by widowhood, divorce or separation. Looking at the unstandardized figures (i.e. mean number of children ever

Table 5.26-Number of children ever born alive per 1000 ever married women by age and marital status, Nepal, 1981

Age	Currently married	Widowed	Divorced/Separated	Total (ever married women)
15-19	438.8	340.8	280.6	437.0
20-24	1189.5	1017.5	584.2	1185.5
25-29	2111.5	1712.1	915.9	2101.9
30-34	2901.4	2323.7	1370.0	2884.4
35-39	3429.8	2686.0	1710.5	3398.1
40-44	3718.2	2917.3	2055.4	3661.2
45-49	3767.1	3016.2	2125.1	3690.6
Total	2383.0	2563.3	1230.7	2382.4
Standardized for age*-	2406.1	1926.0	1214.0	2382.4

*Standardized on the basis of the age distribution of ever married women in 1981.
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Population Census 1981.

born unadjusted for age variation) we find a little higher fertility of widows than that of the women currently married. This is due to the fact that widows are disproportionately of higher ages and therefore, are likely to have higher cumulative fertility because of longer exposure to child bearing. Interpretation of the average number of children ever born should, therefore, be made only after age standardization. When standardized figures are examined we find the fertility of currently married women is higher than that of women whose marriage was disrupted by widowed, divorce or separation. And this pattern still holds for each age group. Women who are currently married.

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[14] . Davis, Kingsley and Judith Blake. 1956. "Social Structure and Fertility: An Analytic Framework", Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. 4, No. 3, April, 1956.

average at least one more child than those who are divorced or separated. And the difference between currently married and widowed women is about half a child. The mean number of children ever born (standardized for age) to currently married, widowed and divorced / separated women were 2.41 , 1.93 and 1.21 respectively. At the end of the reproductive period (i.e. 45 – 49 age group) women whose marriage was currently stable had an average completed family size of 3.77 children compared to 3.02 and 2.12 children for those women who were widowed and divorced/separated.

The relationship observed above between marital status and fertility still holds even when allowance is made for literacy and educational attainment (see Table 5.27). It may be observed that within each educational category, fertility is higher among currently married than among those who are widowed and divorced / separated.

Table 5.27 Number of children never born alive per 1000 ever married women by age, marital status and educational attainment Nepal, Census year 1981

Age	CEB per 1000 ever married woman			
	Total ever married women	Currently married	Widowed	Divorced/Separated
Illiterate				
15-19	419.3	421.0	334.1	256.8
20-24	1169.8	1173.7	1019.2	577.5
25-29	2099.8	2109.6	1719.4	902.1
30-34	2896.1	2913.7	2314.2	1376.3
35-39	3414.6	3447.7	2686.3	1693.7
40-44	3672.2	3731.1	2919.4	2054.8
45-49	3701.0	3780.7	3012.7	2094.5
Total	2410.6	2411.6	2576.0	1233.8
Standardized by age*	2383.4	2408.0	1926.4	1203.4
Literate				
15-19	577.7	580.1	393.2	470.3
20-24	1312.5	1316.4	997.0	656.5
25-29	2121.8	2130.0	1606.6	1059.9
30-34	2742.5	2751.8	2494.6	1290.3
35-39	3162.0	3177.5	2677.6	1940.3
40-44	3468.4	3497.1	2853.0	2070.6
45-49	3488.2	3513.1	3127.1	2803.0
Total	2073.0	2073.9	2279.0	1191.0
Standardized by age*	2328.9	2340.8	1937.9	1358.0
No Schooling				
15-19	532.1	535.0	285.7	453.0
20-24	1251.1	1257.0	678.6	693.2
25-29	2064.1	2075.7	1258.0	1256.1
30-34	2661.7	2673.5	2443.4	1266.7
35-39	3068.8	3091.1	2491.7	1240.0
40-44	3333.9	3364.2	2788.0	1882.4
45-49	3349.5	3383.1	2913.2	2368.4
Total	2143.6	2146.4	2253.4	1187.6
Standardized by age*	2246.4	2261.8	1739.5	1237.5

Table 5.27 Continued ...

Age	CEB per 1000 ever married women			
	Total ever married women	Currently married	Widowed	Divorced / Separated
Primary				
1`-19	627.1	628.2	596.2	489.4
20-24	1387.9	1392.3	1171.4	576.9
25-29	2236.2	2242.8	1929.5	1247.1
30-34	2918.5	2925.3	2615.9	1872.3
35-39	3350.0	3357.9	*3030.3*	2929.8
40-44	3648.0	3673.9	3007.0	2567.6
45-49	3671.5	3689.7	3293.8	4285.7
Total	2207.3	2207.0	2465.5	1465.2
Standardized by age*	2462.9	2472.1	2155.4	1805.1
Lower Secondary				
15-19	554.6	558.8	176.5	384.6
20-24	1451.6	1454.3	1381.0	307.7
25-29	2474.1	2488.0	2206.9	347.8
30-34	3163.5	3178.1	2250.0	600.0
35-39	3634.1	3661.7	2045.5	2333.3
40-44	3902.5	3929.7	3095.2	3000.0
45-49	3854.4	3928.6	3363.6	1500.0
Total	1999.7	2004.3	2107.7	565.8
Standardized by age*	2637.8	2657.6	2026.2	1083.1
Secondary and above				
15-19	540.2	544.1	174.6	500.0
20-24	1208.5	1209.5	1046.9	1040.0
25-29	1903.5	1909.0	1321.4	481.5
30-34	2377.4	2384.3	2446.2	500.0
35-39	2695.2	2708.9	2482.1	1000.0
40-44	3018.3	3051.3	2157.9	727.3
45-49	2975.9	2962.7	3380.0	750.0
Total	1694.3	1696.6	1788.3	693.9
Standardized by age*	2039.6	2046.9	1777.4	723.5

*Standardized on the basis of the age distribution of ever married women in 1981.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Population Census 1981, Unpublished special tabulation.

From the above findings we may conclude that marriage stability on the one hand is positively associated with fertility, and marriage dissolution/disruption on the other is negatively associated with fertility. In other words, the greater the marriage stability the higher the fertility.

THE EFFECT OF CHANGES IN THE MARRIAGE PATTERN ON FERTILITY

The marriage pattern in Nepal has undergone considerable change during the intercensal period 1961-81. These changes are marked by the increasing proportion of single people resulting in the increased mean

age at marriage on the one hand and the falling proportion of widowed on the other. Between 1961 and 1981 the estimated mean age at marriage for females rose from 15.1 **to** 17.1 while the proportion widowed declined from 16.4 per cent to 5.5 per cent. These changes have obvious implications for the birth rate. However, these changes are likely to have counteracting effect on fertility. Increasing age at marriage will have a depressing effect on fertility by limiting the number of younger women who are exposed to pregnancy, while an increase in the age at widowhood has the opposite effect of increasing the numbers of women exposed to the risk of pregnancy. In this section we would like to measure the effect of these changes in the Nuptiality pattern on fertility particularly the Crude Birth Rate (CBR) by comparing the CBRs which would have resulted in 1981 if the proportions married and proportions widowed had remained unchanged from 1961[15]. And the results are presented in Table 5.28.

Table 5.23-Inipaet of changes in marital structure on birth rate

CBR	(1971)-42.6	CBR	(1981)=38.5
ECBR	(1971)-41.9	ECBR	(1981)=38.4
CBRW	(1971)-41.4	CBRW	(1981)=36.5
% change (CBR-CBRW) 1971=2.9%		% change (CBR-CBRW)	1981=5.5%
% change (CBR-ECBR) 1971=1.7%		% change (CBR-ECBR)	1981=0.3 %

Where, CBR (1971)-Estimated Crude Birth Rate in 1971.
ECBR (1971)=Estimated CBR of 1971 if the proportion married in 1971 had remained unchanged from 1961.
CBRW (1971)-Estimated CBR in 1971 if the rate of widowhood had remained unchanged from 1961.
CBR (1981)=Estimated Crude Birth Rate in 1981.
ECBR (1981)=Estimated CBR in 1981 if the proportion married in 1981 had remained unchanged from 1961.
CBRW(1981)-Estimated CBR in 1981 if the rate of widowhood had remained unchanged from 1961.

$$CBR = \frac{\sum_{i-n} [(F)(MW)]}{P} \quad ; \qquad ECBR = \frac{\sum_{i-n} [(W)(PMW)(F)]}{P} \quad ;$$

$$CBRW = \frac{\sum_{i-n} \left[\left(\frac{W^1}{EW^1} - \frac{w}{EW} \right)(EW) \right](F) + \sum_{i-n} \left[(F)(MW) \right]}{P}$$

The formulae for these estimates are as follows:
E
Where, i-n = summation of the quantity for the i th through the n age groups.
F = marital age-specific fertility rate (estimated for 1971 and 1981). MW = number of married women (1971/1981).
P = total population (1971/1981).
W = number of women (1971/1981).
PMW = percentage of married women in 1961.
Wt = number of widowed women in 1961.
w = number of widowed women in (1971/1981).
EWi =3 number of ever-married women in 1961.
EW = number of ever-married women in (1971/1981)

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15. A.similar exercise was carried out by stoeckol et. al. (1976), by using data on changes in marital pattern during 1961-71. The methodologies employed in the present calculations are the same as those employed by Stoeckel et. al. (s-°e, Stoeckel, et. al. 1976. "Marital Structure and Birth Rate in Nepal", *Journal of Bio-social Science 8,* pp. 79-83).

It may be observed that the effect of increasing age at marriage has a very negligible reducing effect on birth rate compared to the boosting effect of the increasing proportion of widowed. If proportions married in 1981 were the same as were those in 1961 the CBR **in** 1981 would have been 38.4 instead of 38.5-a very insignificant reduction of CBR by 0.3 per cent. Whereas, if the proportion of those widowed in 1981 was the same as those in 1961 the CBR in 1981 would have been 5 per cent lower than what is now the case. It shows that the impact of the increase in age at marriage in producing even a slight reduction of the CBR has been more than neutralized by the decline in the incidence of widowhood. This has been further explored by estimating the percentage changes in births by age-group produced by the changes in the marital structure. The data is presented in Table 5.29.

Table 5.29--Estimated percentage change in births by age between 1961 and 1981 produced by shift in marital structure

Age-group	Percentage change
15-19	-29.9
20-24	- 6.2
25-29	- 0.5
30-34	+ 3.2
35-39	+ 8.3
40-44	+16.3
45-49	+28.0

It is to be noted here that although there has been a substantial decline (30%) in the number of births to women in the 15-19 age group due to the increasing proportions of single girls in this age-group in 1981 this was followed by a progressive percentage increase in the number of births to women aged 30 years and older due to the falling incidence of widowhood in 1981. The percentage decline in the number of births to women in the 15-19 age group though very impressive was not sufficient to offset the percentage increase in the number of births to women aged 30 years and above for the following reasons: the contribution to the total number of births by women in the young age-group (15-19) is relatively lower than that of the age-group 30-39 due to differences in age specific fertility as well as absolute numbers of women in these age-groups. As a result the impact of declining incidence of widowhood on the number of births is higher than that of the increase in age at marriage. This finding points out that unless age at marriage is sufficiently increased, the falling incidence of widowhood will have a boosting effect on fertility in a non-contraceptive society like Nepal.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE AGE AT MARRIAGE

Given the importance of age at marriage in a non-contraceptive society like Nepal we made an attempt to identify factors likely to affect age at marriage and those amenable to policy manipulations. Keeping this in view we have examined the effect of some socioeconomic and demographic factors, such as literacy, participation in the labour force and sex-ratio on the female age at marriage (singulate mean age at marriage) by employing district level data of the 1981 census. The ordinary least square regression technique was employed to determine the effect of each independent variable on the female age at marriage. The results are presented in Table 5.30.

Table 5.30- Determinants of singulate mean age at marriage (female) : regression analysis (OLS)

Independent variables t Coefficient value	Regression Coefficient	t value	Significance of t
1. % literate males	.0211	.655	.515
2. % literate females	.0083	.131	.896
3. Sex ratio [a]	-.0425	-6.29	.001*
4. % agricultural population	-.0871	-2.03	.040*
5. Female labour force participation rate	.0374	3.07	.003*
R^2		60.24*	

*Sratistica11y significant.

a. Male divided by female, multiplied by 100.

Among the five independent variables examined here only three (sex ratio, % agricultural population and participation in the female labour force) are found to be significantly associated with the female age at marriage. Of these three variables, participation in the female labour force is the only variable positively affecting the female mean age at marriage in a district. The singulate female mean age at marriage in a district increases on an average by .04 year with one unit increase of female participation in the labour force. And this coefficient is also found to be statistically significant. It shows that the higher the female participation in the labour force in a district, the higher the age at marriage in the district. The proportion of the population engaged in agricultural occupations is found to be negatively associated with the female age at marriage. The singulate female mean age at marriage in a district decreases on an average by -.09 year with one per cent increase of the population engaged in agricultural pursuits. It shows the higher the participation in agricultural activities the lower the female age at marriage of a district. The implication of this finding is to increase the female participation in non-agricultural activities of an area (i. e. the district) in order to boost the female age at marriage. The finding of a significant inverse association between the sex ratio and the age at marriage implies that the higher the proportion of males in a district, the lower the female age at marriage in the district.

From the above findings it is clearly evident that a greater female participation in the labour force particularly in non-agricultural pursuits will lead to a higher female age at marriage. It suggests that a government wishing to increase the female age at marriage in order to reduce fertility in Nepal should find the means to provide roles or opportunities particularly in the nonagricultural sector for women outside their traditional roles of housekeeping.