

CHAPTER X

HOUSEHOLD ANALYSIS: SIZE, COMPOSITION AND HEADSHIP RATES

- Dr. Vidya Bir Singh Kansakar

1. Introduction

Household is the basic and the lowest unit of enumeration providing general framework for the identification and enumeration of individuals in many demographic enquiries. The household as a unit of enumeration, is common to population census, housing census, collection of electorate, sample surveys, etc. Local and district level and ultimately national level planning cannot be contemplated without household data. Population registers are not a recent development. The earliest record of a register of households and persons come from the Han Dynasty in China during the second century B.C. (United Nations, 1969a). Similar systems existed in different countries in different forms. In Nepal also the oldest system of community organisation known as "Guthi" maintained registers on households and persons including births, deaths and marriages occurring within the individual Guthis as well as chronology of the ruling dynasties and major events (CEDA, 1994). The term "Gharduri" basically related to household was the basis for collecting tax and seeking compulsory services both paid and unpaid by the government for the state.

2. Household Data in Nepal

There are historical references regarding number of houses and population in Nepal for different periods. But the historical record on households is available for the census conducted during the period of Prime Minister Jung Bahadur, and some historians claimed it to be the first census of Nepal. As the census spanned over a period of three years between 1853 to 1856, it cannot be termed as census in the true sense, because one of the most important attributes of the census is simultaneity, that is, the total population enumerated should refer to a well defined point or period of time. Moreover, the above census lacked synchronisation of not only the census period in different parts of the country but also the census day (CEDA, 1994). The data collected, contained demographic parameters like number of houses, total population by sex. For the urban areas, data on number of houses and total population by sex are available by localities. For the out-skirt of Kathmandu city such as the Swayambhu area, the locality level data is available for individual households by name of the household heads, total household member by sex, total houses by roof type etc. (Regmi, 1991). It also contained the list of the persons who died due to the cholera epidemic of 1955-56 by relation to the household head by broad age categories, namely, old, adult

and child. Unfortunately, complete registers of the 1953-56 census are not available for the entire country.

The first census of 1911 in Nepal initiated the population census on household basis as revealed by the census schedule which contained a column for the head of the household (Dept. of Statistics, 1957). Data at the household level, however, is not available until 1952/54. Only data on number of houses are available and that too for the census of 1911 and 1942 as published in Population Census Report of 1952/54. From 1952/54 census onwards regular collection and publication of household data started along with the definition of household.

The census of 1952/54 defined household as one which comprises of a member of families or group of individuals or an individual sharing the same kitchen. It conforms to the definition recommended by the United Nations, which states that the concept of "household" is based on the arrangements made by persons, individually or in groups, for providing themselves with food or other essentials for living (United Nations, 1969b). There has been no change in the definition of household in the censuses of Nepal.

3. Household Size: Trends and Regional Differentials

Like most of the countries in the Orient, the size of the family plays an important role in the social structure of Nepal. In a predominantly agricultural country like Nepal where main source of income and livelihood is agriculture, where large number of persons are required for agriculture activities and where the need of some one to look after the aged is of great importance, large and extended families are inevitable. Thus the size of households becomes large with increasing dependency on agriculture. The Tharus are the instance in point with largest households in Nepal (Bista, 1967). They have agriculture as the only occupation. If the life is very hard due to the fact that there is limited property to share among the members of the family, the united efforts of the co-sharers is required to increase the income of the family, and in such cases large family is naturally to be expected. The case of the Sherpas and other communities living in the Himalayan region presents a fine example in this category. These ethnic groups living in a cold and harsh climate with little agriculture have to engage in other activities, such as rearing yaks and sheep, carrying on trade and working as porters in the mountain expeditions, to supplement the very limited income from agriculture. As they have little property to share they try to remain in a large family and spurred by this condition they practice polyandrous marriage among the brothers (Christoph, 1964). In the

Western society a son usually takes to separate living after marriage, but in Nepal sons live in the family as long as they wish. Moreover, severance from the family is usually late and it does not take place until the death of both the parents.

With an increase in the number of jobs outside the traditional sectors and rapid pace of urbanisation, the tendency towards breaking up of family also is increasing rapidly. Physical detachment with the family when one gets employed elsewhere in the country usually leads to formal separation in the long run. In the break-up of the joint family system, the most important deterrent is the responsibility of sons towards the ageing parents. So long as there is no provision for old age security, the system of joint family will continue and the size of the household will remain large, compared to the west and industrialised countries.

The size of the household is also determined by the migratory characteristics of the ethnic groups. Where the ethnic groups are more sedentary and agriculturally well-off, the size of the household is usually large, as in the case of the Tharus who rarely make any movement from their places. Similarly, the Terai people with surplus agriculture and easy access to market for their products and necessities, are also characterised by large families. The Hill people, on the other hand, are compelled to move. The Hill and Mountain regions represent the largest areas of out-migration both within and outside the country, as such the size of the household is usually small, compared to that in the Terai. Nevertheless, since migration is related to movement of a certain member or members of the household, it results in the reduction in the size of the household both in sending and receiving areas.

The census of 1952/54 recorded a total of 1,524,511 households in Nepal with an average household size of 5.4. The largest average household size was recorded in Nawalpur (10.6 persons) and smallest in Jhapa (4.3 persons) (Kansakar, 1974). Large household size was common to the districts of Nawalpur, Chitawan, Dang Deukhuri, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur which were the abode of the Tharus who are noted for very large families (Dept. of Statistics, 1957). Increasing number of new settlers in Nawalpur, Chitawan and Bardia led to a decline in household size in 1961. In 1961, the average household size in Nepal went down to 5.3 (Table 1). This may possibly be attributed to high increase in internal and international migration. Between 1952/54 and 1961 the total absentee population increased from 216,853 persons to 386,824, an increase of 169,971 or 78 per cent. Moreover, international migration from outside the country in 1961 was 337,620 persons with birth place in foreign countries and 110,061 persons by foreign citizenship.

In 1971, the average size of household increased to 5.5 persons and this increase must be related to reduction in mortality due to the expansion of health facilities in the country as well as control over endemicity of malaria in the country. Between 1952/54 and 1961, the annual growth of households exceeded the growth rate of population, but it declined to levels lower than population growth rate in 1971 as well as in 1981 resulting in increased average household size (Table 1). The average household size in Nepal increased to 5.5 in 1971 and 5.8 in 1981 and went down to 5.6 in 1991.

Table 1: Growth of Households and Population, Nepal, 1952/54-1991

| | 1952/54 | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| Households | 1,524,511 | 1,783,975 | 2,084,062 | 2,585,154 | 3,328,198 |
| Growth Rate | - | 2.01 | 1.57 | 2.18 | 2.56 |
| Population | 8,256,625 | 9,412,996 | 11,555,983 | 15,022,839 | 18,488,150 |
| Growth Rate | | 1.77 | 2.07 | 2.66 | 2.10 |
| Average Size of the Household | 5.4 | 5.3 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 5.6 |

Source: CBS, 1958, Table 2
 CBS, 1968, Vol. III CBS, 1975, Vol. 1
 CBS, 1984, Vol. 1, Part 1, Table 1
 CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part 1, Table 1.

The comparative figures of the 1981 and 1991 censuses on household size indicates that there exists regional variation in the household size by Development Regions (Table 2). In 1981, the average household size in Eastern, Central and Western Development regions were marked by levels below the national average of 5.8 while the Mid-Western and Far Western Development regions had levels above the national average. The pattern remained the same in 1991 also. In all the regions the household size decreased in 1991 as compared to 1981. The household size by ecological zones also indicated decline in 1991 as compared to 1981 excepting the Central Terai where the average size of the household increased from 5.6 in 1981 to 5.7 in 1991 (Table 3). In 1981, the smallest household size was recorded in Western Mountain (4.8) and largest in Far-Western Terai (6.9) and these two regions also recorded a smallest household size of 4.4 and largest size of 6.7 respectively in 1991. Among the districts, Manang with an average household size of 4.7 was the district having the smallest household size and Bardia with 7.5 was the district having the largest household size

in 1981 and these two districts continued to have the smallest and largest household sizes in Nepal, the corresponding values being 4.2 and 7.0 respectively in 1991.

Table 2: Average Household Size by Development Region, 1981 and 1991

| | 1981 | 1991 |
|--------------------------------|------|------|
| Nepal | 5.8 | 5.6 |
| Eastern Development Region | 5.7 | 5.4 |
| Central Development Region | 5.7 | 5.5 |
| Western Development Region | 5.7 | 5.5 |
| Mid-Western Development Region | 6.1 | 5.8 |
| Far-Western Development Region | 6.2 | 5.9 |

Source: CBS, 1984, Vol. 1, Part I, Table 1
CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part I, Table 1.

Between 1981 and 1991, the growth of households in Nepal exceeded the growth of population indicating an increasing trend of fragmentation or sub-division of households and/or an increase in the number of migrants in the country both from within the country as well as from outside the country. In all the geographic regions, except the Eastern Mountain, the growth rate of households exceeded the population growth rate. In the case of Western Mountain, it was marked by negative growth rate of population, but households indicated positive growth rate, with population growth rate of -0.15 and household growth rate of 0.74 (Table 3). In Central Terai, the growth rate of both population and households was identical at 2.42 per cent per annum.

4. Rural-Urban Differential in Household Size

There does exist a difference in the household size between the rural and the urban areas (Table 4). In 1981, the average household size in the urban areas was greater than that of the rural areas. The same phenomenon prevailed in different ecological zones. This was probably due to the largeness of the institutional households located in urban areas.

Table 3: Households, Population, Household-Size and Growth-rate of Household and Population between 1981 and 1991

| | No. of Household | | Population in Household | | Average Household Size | | Annual Growth Rate 1981-1991 | |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------|------------------------|------|------------------------------|------------|
| | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 | Household | Population |
| NEPAL | 3,328,198 | 2,585,154 | 18,488,150 | 15,022,839 | 5.6 | 5.8 | 2.56 | 2.10 |
| MOUNTAIN | 274,135 | 236,294 | 1,443,130 | 1,302,896 | 5.3 | 5.5 | 1.50 | 1.03 |
| Eastern Mountain | 67,504 | 63,842 | 359,156 | 338,439 | 5.3 | 5.3 | 0.56 | 0.60 |
| Central Mountain | 94,348 | 77,352 | 471,005 | 413,143 | 5.0 | 5.3 | 2.01 | 1.32 |
| Western Mountain | 4,481 | 4,162 | 19,655 | 19,951 | 4.4 | 4.8 | 0.74 | -0.15 |
| Mid Western Mountain | 47,553 | 43,296 | 260,529 | 242,486 | 5.5 | 5.6 | 0.94 | 0.72 |
| Far Western Mountain | 60,249 | 47,642 | 332,785 | 288,877 | 5.5 | 6.1 | 2.38 | 1.42 |
| HILL | 1,558,493 | 1,240,434 | 8,419,889 | 7,163,115 | 5.4 | 5.8 | 2.31 | 1.63 |
| Eastern Hill | 262,879 | 220,318 | 1,429,138 | 1,257,042 | 5.4 | 5.7 | 1.78 | 1.29 |
| Central Hill | 483,993 | 354,424 | 2,679,599 | 2,108,433 | 5.5 | 5.9 | 3.16 | 2.42 |
| Western Hill | 465,516 | 383,318 | 2,420,878 | 2,150,939 | 5.2 | 5.6 | 1.96 | 1.19 |
| Mid-Western Hill | 221,813 | 179,425 | 1,219,555 | 1,042,365 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 2.14 | 1.58 |
| Far-Western Hill | 124,292 | 102,949 | 670,719 | 604,336 | 5.4 | 5.9 | 1.90 | 1.05 |
| TERAI | 1,495,570 | 1,108,426 | 8,625,131 | 6,556,828 | 5.8 | 5.9 | 3.04 | 2.77 |
| Eastern Terai | 490,856 | 367,635 | 2,655,508 | 2,113,442 | 5.4 | 5.7 | 2.93 | 2.31 |
| Central Terai | 537,087 | 422,769 | 3,033,351 | 2,387,781 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 2.42 | 2.42 |
| Western Terai | 220,163 | 156,803 | 1,330,145 | 957,969 | 6.0 | 6.1 | 3.45 | 3.37 |
| Mid-Western Terai | 146,480 | 99,613 | 930,330 | 670,760 | 6.4 | 6.7 | 3.93 | 3.33 |
| Far Western Terai | 100,984 | 61,606 | 675,797 | 426,876 | 6.7 | 6.9 | 5.01 | 4.70 |

Source: CBS, 1984, Vol. II, Part I, Table 1
CBS, 1995, Vol. IV, Table 1.

In 1991, the rural-urban differential seems to have somewhat reversed. The average household size in urban areas was lower at the national level as well as in each of the ecological zones. This is probably indicative of a significant migration into the urban areas of Nepal. In 1991, Dhankuta and Pokhara towns in the hill recorded the smallest household size of 4.7 indicating large scale outmigration as well as in-migration and similarly the Terai town of Butawal also recorded nearly the smallest household size of 4.8. However, the largest household size recorded in Bhaktapur (6.7) among the hill towns and Tulsipur (6.4) among the Terai towns indicates the predominance of traditional agriculture and social set up, the former representing the traditional agrarian Newar society and the latter representing the traditional agrarian Tharu society. However both in the rural and urban areas of Nepal the size of the household is decreasing due to increase in nuclear families and migration. The high growth rate of households as compared to the population growth rate clearly substantiates this fact (Table 4).

Table 4: Rural-Urban Composition and Growth of Households Population and Household size by Geographic Regions between 1981 and 1991

| | No. of Household | | Total Population | | Average Household Size | | Growth Rate 1981-91 | |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|------------|
| | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | Household | Population |
| Nepal | 2,585,154 | 3,328,198 | 15,022,839 | 18,488,150 | 5.8 | 5.6 | 2.56 | 2.10 |
| Rural | 2,431,626 | 3,014,856 | 14,066,118 | 16,792,431 | 5.8 | 5.6 | 2.17 | 1.79 |
| Urban | 153,528 | 313,342 | 956,721 | 1,695,719 | 6.2 | 5.4 | 7.39 | 5.89 |
| Mountain Region | 236,294 | 274,135 | 1,302,896 | 1,443,130 | 5.5 | 5.3 | 1.50 | 1.03 |
| Rural | 236,294 | 274,135 | 1,302,896 | 1,443,130 | 5.5 | 5.3 | 1.50 | 1.03 |
| Urban | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Hill Region | 1,240,434 | 1,558,493 | 7,163,115 | 8,419,889 | 5.8 | 5.4 | 2.38 | 1.63 |
| Rural | 1,161,173 | 1,393,371 | 6,667,581 | 7,551,994 | 5.7 | 5.4 | 2.30 | 1.42 |
| Urban | 79,261 | 165,122 | 495,534 | 867,895 | 6.3 | 5.3 | 7.62 | 5.76 |
| Terai Region | 1,108,426 | 1,495,570 | 6,556,828 | 8,625,131 | 5.9 | 5.8 | 2.93 | 2.31 |
| Rural | 1,034,159 | 1,347,350 | 6,095,641 | 7,797,307 | 5.9 | 5.8 | 2.68 | 2.49 |
| Urban | 74,267 | 148,220 | 461,187 | 827,824 | 6.2 | 5.6 | 7.15 | 6.02 |

Source: CBS, 1984, Vol. I, Part 1, Table 1
CBS, 1984, Vol. II, Table 1; Vol. 111, Table 1
CBS, 1994, Vol. II, Table 1
CBS, 1995, Vol. IV, Table 1
CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part 1, Table 1.

5. Distribution of Households by Size: Temporal and Spatial Variations

The distribution of households in Nepal by number of persons in the household indicates that prevalence of single member households is the lowest in all the censuses. It accounts for only 4 per cent of the total households in 1991 (Table 5). The largest percentage of households in all the censuses, excepting 1961, was for the household size of 5 persons accounting for 16.0, 15.6 and 17.1 per cent respectively in 1971, 1981 and 1991. During 1961-1971 the growth rate of the households increased as the size of the household increased, starting from a growth rate of 0.25 per cent in 3 person-households to 3.04 per cent in 8 person-households. There was, however, negative growth rate in 1 person and two persons households. Between 1971 and 1981 also, the higher the household size the higher was the rate of growth of households. The only value which was out of trend was the high growth rate of 1.96 in one person-households owing probably to in-migration. However, between 1981 and 1991 the role of migration became more prominent as reflected in the accelerated growth rates in 1 person to 5 person-households in particular and to a certain extent those of 6 person-households. The increase in large-size households also might be due to the significant decline in death rates. The growth rate in the 8 person households drastically declined in 1981 and 1991 and it is more so with households consisting of 9 persons and more.

Table 5: Composition and Growth of Households by Size in Nepal

| Size of the Households | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | Growth Rate (1961-71) | Growth Rate (1971-1981) | Growth Rate (1981-1991) |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Total | 1,783,975 (100.0) | 2,084,062 (100.0) | 2,585,154 (100.0) | 3328721 (100.0) | 1.57 | 2.18 | 2.56 |
| 1 Person | 83,435 (4.7) | 82,198 (3.9) | 99,787 (3.9) | 134321 (4.0) | -0.15 | 1.96 | 3.02 |
| 2 Persons | 177,183 (9.9) | 176,306 (8.5) | 184,900 (7.2) | 255,910 (7.7) | -0.15 | 0.48 | 3.30 |
| 3 Persons | 251,017 (14.1) | 257,411 (12.4) | 273,363 (10.6) | 362,097 (10.9) | 0.25 | 0.60 | 2.85 |
| 4 Persons | 295,023 (16.5) | 325,775 (15.6) | 367,812 (14.2) | 505,653 (15.2) | 1.00 | 1.22 | 3.23 |
| 5 Persons | 282,140 (15.8) | 333,798 (16.0) | 409,182 (15.8) | 568,252 (17.1) | 1.70 | 2.06 | 3.34 |
| 6 Persons | 228,693 (12.8) | 286,072 (13.7) | 375,022 (14.5) | 501,596 (15.1) | 2.26 | 2.74 | 2.95 |
| 7 Persons | 160,490 (9.0) | 212,442 (10.2) | 289,103 (11.2) | 382,109 (11.5) | 2.84 | 3.13 | 2.82 |
| 8 Persons | 105,467 (5.9) | 142,336 (6.8) | 198,128 (7.7) | 225,376 (6.8) | 3.04 | 3.36 | 1.30 |
| 9 Persons & More | 200,427 (11.2) | 267,724 (12.9) | 387,857 (15.0) | 393,407 (11.8) | 2.93 | 3.78 | 0.14 |

Source: CBS, 1968, Vol. I, Part I, Table 7

CBS, 1975, Vol. I, Part I, Table 7

CBS, 1984, Vol. I, Part I, Table 2

CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part I, Table 2.

The size distribution of households in geographic regions indicates the largest proportion of household are those consisting of 5 persons accounting for 15.5 to 16.3 per cent in 1981 which increased in 1991 to 17.0 to 17.3 per cent (Table 6). As compared to 1981, there had been an increase in the proportion of households of sizes upto 7 with a few exceptions, namely, 1 person households in Mountain and Terai regions and 3 person-households in the Terai. As for the 1 person households in the Mountain region it is marked by absolute decline from 12,542 in 1981 to 12,511 in 1991 and the decline is probably the result of out migration. The total population of Western Mountain in 1991 was 19,655 while the population born in Western Mountain but enumerated elsewhere in Nepal was 5,140 accounting for more than one-fourth of the total population of Western Mountain. Though there was decline in the percentage of 1 person and 3 person-households in the Terai, they were marked by absolute increase between 1981 and 1991.

Table 6: Composition of Households by Size For Ecological Zones, 1981-1991

| Size of the House holds | Nepal | | Mountain | | Hills | | Terai | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 |
| Total | 3,328,721 | 2,585,154 | 274,135 | 236,294 | 1,558,493 | 1,240,434 | 1,496,093 | 1,108,426 |
| | (100.0) | (100.0) | (100.0) | (100.0) | (100.0) | (100.0) | (100.0) | (100.0) |
| 1 Person | 134,321 | 99,787 | 12,511 | 12,542 | 69,869 | 45,897 | 51,941 | 41,348 |
| | (4.0) | (3.9) | (4.6) | (5.3) | (4.5) | (3.7) | (3.5) | (3.7) |
| 2 Persons | 255,910 | 184,900 | 22,156 | 16,216 | 120,797 | 84,374 | 112,957 | 84,310 |
| | (7.7) | (7.1) | (8.1) | (6.9) | (7.8) | (6.8) | (7.6) | (7.6) |
| 3 Persons | 362,097 | 273,363 | 32,681 | 26,317 | 173,889 | 128,379 | 155,527 | 118,667 |
| | (10.9) | (10.6) | (11.9) | (11.2) | (11.2) | (10.4) | (10.4) | (10.7) |
| 4 Persons | 505,653 | 367,812 | 43,578 | 35,478 | 240,952 | 175,745 | 221,123 | 156,589 |
| | (15.2) | (14.2) | (15.9) | (15.0) | (15.5) | (14.2) | (14.8) | (14.1) |
| 5 Persons | 568,252 | 409,182 | 47,392 | 38,567 | 264,925 | 199,417 | 255,935 | 171,198 |
| | (17.1) | (15.8) | (17.3) | (16.3) | (17.0) | (16.1) | (17.1) | (15.5) |
| 6 Persons | 501,596 | 375,022 | 41,366 | 34,023 | 236,039 | 184,928 | 224,991 | 156,071 |
| | (15.1) | (14.5) | (15.1) | (14.4) | (15.1) | (14.9) | (15.0) | (14.1) |
| 7 Persons | 382,109 | 289,103 | 31,253 | 25,764 | 181,337 | 143,890 | 169,519 | 119,449 |
| | (11.5) | (11.2) | (11.4) | (10.9) | (11.6) | (11.6) | (11.3) | (10.8) |
| 8 Persons | 225,376 | 198,128 | 17,791 | 17,076 | 107,636 | 99,291 | 99,949 | 81,761 |
| | (6.8) | (7.7) | (6.5) | (7.2) | (6.9) | (8.0) | (6.7) | (7.4) |
| 9 and more Persons | 393,407 | 387,857 | 25,407 | 30,311 | 163,049 | 178,513 | 204,951 | 179,033 |
| | (11.8) | (15.0) | (9.3) | (12.8) | (10.5) | (14.4) | (13.7) | (16.2) |

Source: CBS, 1984, Vol. I, Part I, Table 2
CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part I, Table 2.

The distribution of households by size in Development Regions are marked by wide variations. The Western Development Region is marked by percentage of 1,2 and 3 member-households exceeding the national average (Table 7). In the 4 and 5 persons household, the Eastern and Central Development Regions exceed the national average. Households with 6,7, 8 and 9 or more persons are characteristic of Mid-Western and Far-Western Development Regions with percentages exceeding those of the national aggregates.

Table 7: Distribution of Households by Size For Development Regions, 1991

| | NEPAL | EDR | CDR | WDR | MWDR | FWDR |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 1 Person | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 5.1 | 3.2 | 3.4 |
| 2 Persons | 7.7 | 7.7 | 7.6 | 8.4 | 6.7 | 6.7 |
| 3 Persons | 10.9 | 11.2 | 10.8 | 11.0 | 10.7 | 10.4 |
| 4 Persons | 15.2 | 15.4 | 15.5 | 14.9 | 14.8 | 14.4 |
| 5 Persons | 17.1 | 17.4 | 17.5 | 16.5 | 16.6 | 16.6 |
| 6 Persons | 15.1 | 15.3 | 15.0 | 14.6 | 15.3 | 15.3 |
| 7 Persons | 11.5 | 11.7 | 11.4 | 11.2 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| 8 Persons | 6.8 | 6.9 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 7.2 | 7.1 |
| 9 and more Persons | 11.8 | 10.4 | 11.8 | 11.6 | 13.4 | 14.1 |

Source: CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part I, Table 2.

There are rural-urban differentials in the distribution of households by size (Table 8).

Table 8: Rural-Urban Differential in Household Size Distribution, 1981-1991

| | NEPAL | | Rural | | Urban | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|
| | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 | 1991 | 1981 |
| Total | 3,328,721 | 2,585,154 | 3,015,379 | 2,431,626 | 313,342 | 153,528 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 1 Persons | 134,301 | 99,787 | 115,448 | 91,288 | 18,853 | 8,499 |
| | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 6.0 | 5.5 |
| 2 Persons | 255,910 | 184,900 | 227,557 | 173,814 | 28,353 | 11,086 |
| | 7.7 | 7.1 | 7.6 | 7.1 | 9.1 | 7.2 |
| 3 Persons | 362,097 | 273,363 | 325,596 | 259,112 | 36,504 | 14,251 |
| | 10.9 | 10.6 | 10.8 | 10.7 | 11.6 | 9.3 |
| 4 Persons | 505,653 | 367,812 | 455,303 | 348,651 | 50,350 | 19,161 |
| | 15.2 | 14.2 | 15.1 | 14.3 | 16.1 | 12.5 |
| 5 Persons | 568,252 | 409,182 | 514,735 | 386,870 | 53,517 | 22,312 |
| | 17.1 | 15.8 | 17.1 | 15.9 | 17.1 | 14.5 |
| 6 Persons | 501,596 | 375,022 | 459,417 | 354,242 | 42,279 | 20,780 |
| | 15.1 | 14.5 | 15.2 | 14.6 | 13.5 | 13.5 |
| 7 Persons | 382,109 | 289,103 | 352,094 | 272,563 | 30,015 | 16,540 |
| | 11.5 | 11.2 | 11.7 | 11.2 | 9.6 | 10.8 |
| 8 Persons | 225,376 | 198,128 | 208,369 | 186,499 | 17,007 | 11,629 |
| | 6.8 | 7.7 | 6.9 | 7.7 | 5.4 | 7.6 |
| 9 and more Persons | 393,407 | 387,857 | 356,943 | 358,587 | 36,464 | 29,270 |
| | 11.8 | 15.0 | 11.8 | 14.7 | 11.6 | 19.1 |

Source: CBS, 1984, Vol. I, Part I, Table 2

CBS, 1984, Vol. III, Table 2

CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part I, Table 2

CBS, 1994, Vol. II, Table 2.

Further, there is also a change between 1981 and 1991 in the urban-rural differential. In 1991, proportionality there are more households with sizes 1-4, and less households with sizes 5 and above in urban than in rural areas. This pattern is significantly different from that of 1981. In 1981, only in the case of single-person households the urban proportion was higher than the rural proportion.

6. Household Headship Rates by Sex and Age

Data on household head which is available only for the 1991 census shows that proportion of female heads is much lower than that of male heads. The sex composition of the household heads are characterized by 87 per cent of households headed by males in the country and is similar both in rural and urban areas (Table 9). The compact functional unit of patriarchal family which is characteristic of all the ethnic groups in Nepal as in many countries of the world is the primary factor for overwhelming male domination in household headships. Due to large scale male selective out-migration, the hill and mountain regions of the Western and Far-Western Development Regions have relatively high percentage of female-headed households accounting for 19.2 and 14.0 per cent respectively, whereas the percentage in the case of the other regions is below the national level of 13.2 per cent.

Table 9: Composition of Household Heads by Sex for Urban-Rural and Development Regions, 1991

| | Total | | Males | | Females | |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|
| Nepal | 3,328,721 | (100.0) | 2,890,104 | (86.8) | 438,617 | (13.2) |
| Rural | 3,015,379 | (100.0) | 2,617,270 | (86.8) | 398,109 | (13.2) |
| Urban | 313,342 | (100.0) | 272,834 | (87.1) | 40,508 | (12.9) |
| Eastern Dev. Region | 821,762 | (100.0) | 721,926 | (87.9) | 99,836 | (12.1) |
| Central Dev. Region | 1,115,428 | (100.0) | 997,980 | (89.5) | 117,441 | (10.5) |
| Western Dev. Region | 690,160 | (100.0) | 554,440 | (80.8) | 135,720 | (19.2) |
| Mid-Western Dev. Region | 415,840 | (100.0) | 370,233 | (89.0) | 45,613 | (11.0) |
| Far-Western Dev. Region | 285,525 | (100.0) | 245,525 | (86.0) | 40,000 | (14.0) |

Source: CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part I, Table 2
CBS, 1994, Vol. II, Table 2.

Household headship rate, defined as the number of household heads per 100 persons in a given sex - age group, indicates the female headship rate is significantly lower than the male headship rate at all ages (Table 10). The overall headship rate in Nepal is 45.0 per cent for males compared to 6.7 per cent for females. The headship rates for males are somewhat different in the urban and rural areas, these being 41.1 and 45.5 respectively, while female headship rates for urban and rural areas

are the same as the national rate of 6.7 per cent (Table 10). The overall headship rates for females exhibit significant variations among the Development Regions. The female headship rates are lower than national rate for Eastern, Central and Mid-Western Development Region, while these are higher for Western and Far-Western Development Regions (Table 11). The lowest headship rate for both males and females is in the age group 10-19. The highest rate of household headship for males is in the age group of 50-59 years, whereas for females it is in age group 60-69. At these older ages, more and more women find themselves without a husband due to marriage dissolution and hence are compelled to take up the responsibility as head of the household. It would be of interest to examine the relationship between marital status and household headship among males and females.

Table 10: Household Headship Rates by Age and Sex for Urban and Rural Areas (10 years and above), Nepal, 1991

| | | Nepal | | Urban | | Rural | |
|--------------|-----|-----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | P | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| TOTAL | | 6,418,531 | 6,556,658 | 664,147 | 607,451 | 5,754,384 | 5,959,207 |
| | H H | 2,890,104(86.8) | 438,617(13.2) | 272,834(87.1) | 40,508(12.3) | 2,617,270(86.8) | 398,109(13.2) |
| | HR | 45.0 | 6.7 | 41.1 | 6.7 | 45.5 | 6.7 |
| 10-19 | P | 2,087,838 | 2,031,975 | 204,534 | 188,644 | 1,883,304 | 1,843,331 |
| | HH | 31,093 | 4,712 | 4,419(16) | 797(2.0) | 26,674(1.0) | 3,915(0.0) |
| | HR | 1.5 | 0.2 | 2.2 | 0.4 | 1.4 | 0.2 |
| 20-29 | P | 1,377,547 | 1,583,625 | 172,978 | 166,946 | 1,204,569 | 1,416,679 |
| | HH | 445,269 | 56,272 | 53,031(19.4) | 5,498(13.6) | 392,238(15.0) | 50,774(12.8) |
| | HR | 32.3 | 3.6 | 30.7 | 3.3 | 32.6 | 3.6 |
| 30-39 | P | 1,068,678 | 1,112,870 | 118,274 | 104,653 | 950,404 | 1,098,217 |
| | HH | 760,414 | 92,721 | 77,493(28.4) | 7,891(19.5) | 682,921(26.1) | 84,830(21.3) |
| | HR | 71.2 | 8.3 | 65.5 | 7.5 | 71.9 | 7.7 |
| 40-49 | P | 784,354 | 792,527 | 76,260 | 64,382 | 708,094 | 728,145 |
| | HH | 692,837 | 99,977 | 63,243(23.2) | 8,194(20.2) | 629,594(24.1) | 99,083 |
| | HR | 88.3 | 12.6 | 82.9 | 12.7 | 88.9 | 13.6 |
| 50-59 | P | 557,486 | 506,955 | 45,479 | 39,727 | 512,007 | 467,228 |
| | HH | 513,007 | 85,433 | 40,080(14.7) | 7,631(18.8) | 472,927(18.1) | 77,802(19.5) |
| | HR | 92.0 | | | | 92.4 | 16.6 |
| 60-69 | P | 357,186 | 344,931 | 26,495 | 26,647 | 330,691 | 318,284 |
| | HH | 313,515 | 67,564 | 22,965(8.4) | 6,594(16.3) | 290,550(11.1) | 60,970(15.3) |
| | HR | 87.8 | 19.6 | 86.7 | 24.7 | 87.9 | 19.2 |
| 70 and above | P | 185,552 | 183,565 | 15,127 | 16,432 | 169,120 | 167,133 |
| | HH | 133,969 | 31,938 | 11,603(4.3) | 3,900 | 122,366(4.7) | 28,035(7.0) |
| | HR | 72.2 | | | | 72.4 | 16.8 |

Source: Population Census of 1991, (Special Tabulations).
CBS, 1993, Vol. 1, Part I, Table 7.

P = Population
HH = Household Head
HR = Headship Rate

Table 11: Household Headship Rates by Age and Sex For Development Regions (10 Years and above), Nepal, 1991

| Age Groups | NEPAL | | EDR | | CDR | | WDR | | MWDR | | FWDR | |
|--------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| Total | 45.0 | 6.7 | 46.0 | 6.3 | 44.8 | 5.4 | 44.4 | 9.7 | 45.2 | 5.5 | 44.4 | 6.8 |
| 10-19 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 1.3 | 0.2 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 2.0 | 0.2 | 2.2 | 0.2 |
| 20-29 | 32.3 | 3.6 | 34.5 | 2.7 | 30.9 | 2.2 | 27.9 | 6.8 | 35.9 | 3.3 | 35.1 | 4.3 |
| 30-39 | 71.2 | 8.3 | 75.7 | 7.1 | 69.2 | 5.4 | 67.0 | 14.2 | 73.4 | 7.6 | 71.6 | 10.2 |
| 40-49 | 88.3 | 12.6 | 90.5 | 12.9 | 87.4 | 10.0 | 87.2 | 16.7 | 88.8 | 11.3 | 87.7 | 13.7 |
| 50-59 | 92.0 | 16.9 | 93.0 | 18.2 | 91.8 | 14.9 | 92.6 | 20.5 | 91.0 | 14.2 | 90.3 | 15.1 |
| 60-69 | 87.8 | 19.6 | 88.1 | 20.8 | 88.1 | 18.2 | 90.7 | 23.7 | 84.4 | 16.0 | 81.5 | 15.0 |
| 70 and above | 72.2 | 17.4 | 71.2 | 18.0 | 74.9 | 17.9 | 75.1 | 19.1 | 66.4 | 12.6 | 60.3 | 12.0 |

Source: CBS, 1993, Vol. I, Part I, Table 7.

Household headship rate for the total population by marital status is shown for males and females in Table 12. Household headship rates by marital status indicate higher rate for males in all groups except the separated category. In the separated category, the rate is higher for females for the nation as a whole, as well as for all the regions except the Central Development Region. Among the married category, the man usually is the head of the household and the female headship in this category probably is on account of the husband being away. A high rate of female headship of 9.3 per cent in the Western Development Region could be due to out-migration of the husband both within and outside the country mostly for army services. As the mortality rate among the migrants serving in the army is very high, it is clearly reflected by a headship rate among widows of 43.9 per cent, the highest headship rate among all the development regions.

Table 12: Household Headship Rates by Marital Status and by Development Region (Age Group 10 years and above), Nepal, 1991

| Marital Status | Nepal | | EDR | | CDR | | WDR | | MWDR | | FWDR | |
|-------------------|-------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Total | 45.0 | 6.7 | 46.0 | 6.3 | 44.8 | 5.4 | 44.4 | 9.7 | 45.2 | 5.5 | 44.4 | 6.8 |
| Single | 2.9 | 0.6 | 2.6 | 0.7 | 3.1 | 0.6 | 2.5 | 0.8 | 3.1 | 0.4 | 2.9 | 0.3 |
| Married | 69.0 | 5.4 | 74.0 | 4.6 | 67.0 | 3.6 | 67.9 | 9.3 | 68.4 | 4.4 | 66.9 | 5.9 |
| Widow/ Widower | 67.9 | 38.0 | 68.5 | 41.0 | 69.6 | 35.8 | 68.6 | 43.9 | 66.6 | 32.5 | 60.0 | 30.6 |
| Divorced | 35.4 | 20.0 | 37.1 | 24.0 | 36.7 | 19.0 | 40.2 | 24.8 | 31.3 | 13.1 | 25.7 | 18.4 |
| Separated | 43.1 | 44.0 | 45.8 | 47.9 | 43.5 | 39.2 | 45.3 | 50.4 | 38.5 | 38.4 | 34.3 | 35.8 |
| Not Stated | 14.3 | 5.3 | 12.9 | 5.4 | 12.2 | 4.5 | 21.1 | 5.8 | 15.0 | 5.8 | 10.7 | 5.7 |

Source: Population Census 1991, (Special Tabulations).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be said that average household size in Nepal is large and there are indications of a change towards a lower size. This change probably is on account of early fragmentation of the household as well as due to migration. However, considering the overwhelming dependency on agriculture, the average household size in the rural areas will change slowly as compared to urban areas. The high growth rate in the smaller households indicates the trends towards small household - size in future. The higher growth rate of households as compared to the growth rate of population will have several implications. The most important implication of high growth rate of households will be the increasing demand for housing and related services such as electricity, water, sanitation, etc. Such demands, which are likely to be higher in urban than in rural areas, are likely to aggravate the already prevailing urban problems in Nepal.

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