

CHAPTER 4

NUPTIALITY PATTERN AT CRUCIAL AGES

4.1 General

Apart from SMAM, significant parameters of nuptiality pattern are the levels of marital statuses of males and females at crucial ages. Study of the marriage pattern in the age groups 20-24, 45-49 and 60 and over can best reveal the marriage scenario of an area for the following reasons: early marriage behaviour is reflected by the age group 20-24; the proportion single in the age group 45-49 indicates the general celibacy level; and the extent of widowhood and dissolution of marriage union by divorce or separation can best be studied at ages 60 and over.

The proportion never married in the age group 20-24 and the proportion widowed among the population in the older age group of 60 and over for Cambodia and all the provinces are presented in Table 4.1. Corresponding data of the 1998 Census are given in Annex Table 2 which may be referred to for detailed comparison.

4.1.1 Singles in the Age Group 20-24

At the national level males have a much higher proportion of singles in this age group. The proportion single has increased by 21.1 percent and 24.7 percent for males and females respectively during the decade 1998-2008 (computed from Table 4.1 and Annex Table 2). As a result, the difference in proportions single between the sexes has risen from 19.01 to 21.61 percentage points. It has to be noted that SMAM of females (23.3) at the national level falls in this age group while SMAM of males happens to be in the next higher age group of 25-29. The rate of increase of SMAM for males is higher than that of females in the country as a whole during the decade (see Chapter 3).

4.1.2 Celibate Persons

Among males of the age group 45-49 the proportion never married continued to be very low in 2008 (about 1 percent) whereas the proportion single is about 5 percent among women of the same age group (Table 2.3). When they are young, men delay their marriage, but at the end they all get married. As may be seen from Table 4.2 the celibacy level among women in Cambodia as a whole has increased by less than one percentage point only during the decade 1998-2008. However the present marital pattern where about 5 percent of women in the age group 45-49 remain never married is however different from the universal marriage situation that existed in Cambodia in earlier times.

4.1.3 Widowed and Divorced/Separated among the Elderly

The proportion widowed among females in the elderly age group of 60 and over is at a high level in 2008 (41.81 percent). It is remarkable that it has declined by 13 percent from 48.09 percent in 1998 (Table 4.1 and Annex Table 2). This may be due to increased expectation of life of both males and females during the decade and higher expectation of life of women compared to men. Further, the number of women aged 60 and above has increased by 43.6 percent during the decade as against a 25 percent increase in the number of widows (computed from Annex Table 1 and Table A2 of 1998 Census). The proportion of divorced and separated women (60+) in Cambodia

has decreased by about one percentage point during the decade (Table 4.3). This may also be attributed to a lower rate of increase of the number of divorced/separated women (19.1 percent) compared to the decadal increase of the number of elderly women. It is said that a woman divorced or separated from her husband might say in Khmer language that she was Memai which means that she was “widowed”. The enumerators who were cautioned about this tendency during training had ascertained the answers after putting probing questions in cases of doubt. However it is possible that this tendency could have contributed to a marginal increase in the number of widows and decrease in the number of divorced/separated women.

4.2 Differentials in Marital Statuses

Geographical distribution of population and migration trends due to social and economic reasons, give rise to differential nuptiality. Moreover tradition, culture and ethnicity have a lasting influence on the nuptiality pattern both at the national and sub-national levels. Differentials in marital pattern by province as well as urban-rural variations are also examined for a clearer understanding of the marital status behaviour of males and females in the country.

4.2.1. Differentials by Province

Table 4.1 Percent Never Married among the Population Aged 20-24 and Percentage Widowed among the Population Aged 60 and above by Sex and Province

Cambodia/ Region/ Province	Never Married			Widowed		
	Age 20 - 24			Age 60 and above		
	Male	Female	Difference	Male	Female	Difference
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Cambodia	70.84	49.23	21.61	9.83	41.81	-31.99
Plains Region						
Kampong Cham	67.33	40.57	26.76	10.07	39.07	-29.01
Kandal	75.73	56.58	19.15	10.12	40.13	-30.01
Phnom Penh	85.89	72.66	13.23	7.23	39.68	-32.45
Prey Veng	64.03	37.08	26.95	10.81	41.87	-31.06
Svay Rieng	63.61	38.72	24.89	10.02	45.90	-35.88
TaKeo	69.06	43.34	25.72	10.67	42.03	-31.36
Tonle Sap Region						
Banteay Meanchey	68.05	44.86	23.19	10.70	42.28	-31.58
Battambang	72.42	49.46	22.96	10.16	42.03	-31.87
Kampong Chhnang	70.25	48.90	21.35	9.88	46.60	-36.72
Kampong Thom	66.78	40.74	26.04	10.43	43.95	-33.51
Pursat	68.48	48.10	20.38	8.49	43.04	-34.55
Siemreap	67.90	47.68	20.22	11.52	43.39	-31.87
Otdar Meanchey	58.58	34.43	24.16	9.07	43.21	-34.15
Pailin	69.52	41.22	28.30	9.92	38.89	-28.97
Coastal Region						
Kampot	62.00	40.08	21.93	9.98	43.74	-33.76
Koh Kong	71.11	39.67	31.44	6.99	40.78	-33.79
Preah Sihanouk	77.09	53.43	23.65	6.94	43.07	-36.13
Kep	64.45	40.68	23.77	8.50	47.28	-38.79

Plateau and Mountain Region						
Kampong Speu	63.77	41.47	22.30	9.42	42.45	-33.03
Kratie	71.11	38.79	32.32	9.65	42.77	-33.12
Mondul Kiri	63.92	27.48	36.44	10.04	42.03	-31.99
Preah Vihear	60.01	34.23	25.78	9.73	44.97	-35.24
Ratanak Kiri	55.44	27.85	27.59	4.97	35.23	-30.27
Stung Treng	63.61	38.72	24.89	10.02	45.90	-35.88

According to Table 4.1, Phnom Penh Municipality has the highest proportion never married among both males (85.89 percent) and females (72.66 percent) of the age group 20-24. The same position existed in 1998 also but with 82.06 percent for males and 58.24 percent for females (Annex Table 2). The striking increase in the proportion of young never married females in the capital during the decade underlines the growing number of young married women moving to Phnom Penh from other provinces to work in industries like the garment factories and other establishments. The rapid all round development of Phnom Penh with the consequent increase in the number of new entrants to the labour force and educational institutions, is the main reason for the increase during the decade in the proportion of single males by about 3.83 percentage points and the relatively higher increase in the proportion of single females by 14.42 percentage points during the decade (Table 4.1 and Annex Table 2). In 2008, in the case of men the incidence of postponement of marriage is higher than the national level (70.84 percent) in the following provinces (other than Phnom Penh): Kandal, Battambang, Koh Kong, Preah Sihanouk and Kratie. As regards women, the corresponding provinces are Kandal, Battambang and Preah Sihanouk. The provinces of Ratanak Kiri and Mondol Kiri where people mostly follow traditional marriage practices have recorded comparatively low proportion of never married females of the younger age group (20-24).

The difference between the male and female proportion of the never married in the age group 20-24 indicates the different marital pattern between the two sexes existing in the provinces. The highest gender differential is noted (Table 4.1) in Mondul Kiri province (36 percentage points) followed by the provinces of Kratie and Koh Kong. The gender gap is the lowest in Phnom Penh (13 percentage points). In the provinces, delay in marriage is caused by different factors in respect of both young men and women. These factors depend on various opportunities and constraints existing in each province.

Kandal and Otdar Meanchey provinces have recorded the highest and lowest celibacy levels in 2008. The corresponding provinces in 1998 were Kampong Chhnang and Pailin (Table 4.2). The provinces in the Plains Region continue to have high celibacy level among women during the decade. The provinces in the Coastal Region have low celibacy levels as per both the censuses. In the Tonle Sap Region the celibacy levels vary widely among the provinces both in 1998 and 2008.

Table 4.2 Percent Never Married among Women Aged 45-49, Cambodia, Region and Province 2008 and 1998

Cambodia/ Region/ Province	Percentage of Never married females aged 45-49	
	2008	1998
(1)	(2)	(3)
Cambodia	4.96	4.23
Plains Region	5.90	4.80
Kampong Cham	5.08	4.33
Kandal	6.77	5.05
Phnom Penh	6.40	4.80
Prey Veng	6.01	5.46
SvayRieng	6.16	5.58
TaKeo	5.26	4.01
Tonle Sap Region	4.22	3.98
Banteay Meanchey	3.26	3.00
Battambang	4.41	3.84
Kampong Chhnang	6.38	6.06
Kampong Thom	4.57	3.76
Pursat	3.79	3.58
Siemreap	4.43	4.04
Otdar Meanchey	0.98	2.54
Pailin	1.39	1.57
Coastal Region	3.47	2.67
Kampot	3.83	3.13
Koh Kong	1.97	1.96
Preah Sihanouk	3.17	1.69
Kep	4.23	2.26
Plateau and Mountain Region	3.69	2.90
Kampong Speu	3.98	3.16
Kratie	4.13	3.30
Mondul Kiri	3.69	3.24
PreahVihear	3.04	2.04
Ratanak Kiri	2.37	1.59
Stung Treng	3.01	1.81

Widowhood is at a high level among older women (60+) in almost all the provinces (Table 4.1). The percentage of widows is the lowest in Ratanak Kiri province (35.2 percent). On the other hand, Krong Kep has the highest proportion of widows (47.28percent) followed by Kampong Chhnang (46.6 percent) and Svay Rieng (45.9 percent). The proportion of widowers is much lower than that of widows in all provinces for reasons stated already. Among the provinces the difference between the two proportions ranges from about 29 percent in Kompong Cham and Pailin to nearly 39 percent in Kep. These statistics underline the urgent need for programmes of welfare of the widowed elderly in all the provinces.

As may be seen from Table 4.1 and Annex Table 2, barring the three provinces of Pailin, Mondul Kiri and Stung Treng, the percentage of elderly widows was higher in 1998 than in 2008. In 1998, Preah Sihanouk province had the highest percentage of elderly widows (54.22 percent) followed by Krong Kep (51.76 percent).

According to Table 4.3 the highest percentage of divorced or separated women in 2008 is observed in Pailin (8.76) and the lowest in Siemreap (4.50). The corresponding provinces in 1998 are Mondul Kiri (9.73 percent) and Prey Veng (4.93 percent).

Table 4.3 Percentage Divorced/ Separated among Women Aged 60 and above, Cambodia, Region and Province, 2008 and 1998

Cambodia/ Region/ Province	Percentage	
	2008	1998
(1)	(2)	(3)
Cambodia	5.22	6.28
Plains Region	4.94	5.97
Kampong Cham	4.92	6.29
Kandal	4.91	5.49
Phnom Penh	5.42	7.54
Prey Veng	4.67	4.93
SvayRieng	4.61	5.01
TaKeo	4.93	6.06
Tonle Sap Region	5.37	6.49
Banteay Meanchey	5.31	6.53
Battambang	6.24	7.35
Kampong Chhnang	5.07	5.69
Kampong Thom	4.78	5.88
Pursat	5.89	8.75
Siemreap	4.50	5.30
Otdar Meanchey	5.80	5.40
Pailin	8.76	8.60
Coastal Region	5.76	6.94
Kampot	5.32	6.80
Koh Kong	7.52	6.95
Preah Sihanouk	6.67	7.83
Kep	5.99	5.87
Plateau and Mountain Region	5.87	7.03
Kampong Speu	5.90	7.42
Kratie	5.57	5.78
Mondul Kiri	5.86	9.73
PreahVihear	5.55	7.11
Ratanak Kiri	7.18	6.46
Stung Treng	5.75	8.25

4.3 Urban-Rural Variations

Both among men and women the proportion single is higher and the proportion married lower in the urban areas as compared to the rural areas (see Figures 2.2a to 2.3b). The higher proportion of singles in the urban areas is mainly due to higher age at marriage and migration of unmarried young men and women for the purpose of study or employment.

The situation regarding urban-rural differential in marital pattern in 2008 is explained below: The percentage of currently married males by age and urban-rural residence is presented in Figure

2.3a. The trend in the percentage of currently married females is shown in Figure 2.3b. No major difference is noticed between the urban and rural areas with regard to trend in the proportion married among females. In the younger ages, however, the proportion married is much higher in the rural areas. In respect of males the biggest gap between the proportions married in the urban and rural areas (with proportion being lower in urban areas) is seen at the ages 25 to 29. It evens out after age 35 (Figure 2.3a).

The urban-rural gap in proportion single at ages 20-24 (Annex Table 4; Figures 2.2a and 2.2b) is higher for females (25.9 percentage points) compared to males (17.9 percentage points). But in the next higher age group of 25-29 the gap in this respect is quite significant for males. The influence of urbanisation on the youth especially men as one of the major factors responsible for postponing marriage is evident. As per Annex Table 4, the percentage of population never married at the age of 45-49 (celibates) though low in general, is higher for both men and women in the urban areas than in the rural areas (for men it is 2.11 percent in the urban areas and 1.11 percent in the rural areas; the corresponding percentages for women are 5.77 and 4.77 respectively). The higher celibacy level in the urban areas may perhaps be attributed partially to urbanisation influence though it essentially reflects traditional and cultural influences.

There are no major urban-rural differences in the widowhood pattern in general as may be seen from Figures 2.4a and 2.4b. The conspicuous differential is by sex with proportions of widows being higher than widowers in all the age groups particularly in the older age groups. The percentage of widows increases with age in both urban and rural areas reaching about 14 percent in the age group 50-54. It ultimately rises to 54.2 percent in the urban areas and 55.6 percent in the rural areas at the ripe old ages of 75 years and above.

The proportion of widowers in the age group 60-64 is 4.1 percent in the urban areas and 4.9 percent in the rural areas. It ultimately rises to 18.5 percent in the urban areas and 20.5 percent in the rural areas at the very old ages. As regards divorced/ separated category also no major urban-rural differential exists for males. In the case of females in the rural areas, however, it increases initially up to age 50 and declines thereafter.

The trend in currently married category is more or less the same in both type of residences in 1998 and 2008 (Figures 2.3a and 2.3b). The tendency of urban males getting married at later years than their rural counterparts continued in the decade with further increase in age at marriage from its level in 1998. The urban-rural gap in proportion single of males was the highest in the age group 20-24 in 1998. The proportion of widows continued to be higher than that of widowers at age 60 and above both in the urban and rural areas during the decade. There is a small decrease in the difference between the proportions of widows and widowers in both urban and rural areas (Table 4.5 and Annex Table 3) during that period.

4.4 Role of Education in Postponement of Marriage

Substantially higher proportion of singles among literate males and females aged 20-24 compared to their illiterate counterparts (Table 4.4) clearly indicate that literacy has a strong influence on postponement of marriage by youngsters. The proportion of single males is considerably higher than that of single females among both literate and illiterate population. This is due to the general lower age at marriage of women than men. In general, there is a substantial increase in the proportion single among both males and females of the age group 20-24 with increase in educational levels (Table 4.4).