

## RATE OF INCIDENCE OF WIDOWHOOD

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RATE of incidence of widowhood at a given age is the chance that a married woman of that age becomes a widow. This is given by the proportion of widowed women at the given age among the total number of women exposed to the risk of widowhood at that age. A woman reported to be married at present is exposed to the risk of widowhood from her age at marriage, while a widow is exposed to the risk of widowhood only for the period from her marriage to her age at widowhood. Further, if a widow remarries she is again exposed to the risk of widowhood from her age at remarriage till she is widowed again. Such remarried women may pose problems somewhat different from the problems of the once-married. These have also been discussed in the subsequent sections.

For the purpose of calculating the rates of incidence of widowhood data available from the "Demographic Survey of Six Rural Communities"<sup>1</sup> have been utilized. Detailed marital histories of all women were recorded in the family schedule canvassed for this survey. Information regarding age at marriage, age at widowhood, etc., of 11,132 ever-married women (women who have married at least once in their lifetime) is available from the survey. Among these some women are reported to be divorced or separated. In the case of divorced women, the question of widowhood does not arise and in the case of the separated, it may not be possible to know whether the husbands are alive or dead. Their number is also not considerable being 342, i.e. about three per cent. Therefore in estimating the incidence of widowhood the 342 women who were either divorced or separated and seven women in whose case marital history was not available are excluded. Thus, information regarding 10,783 women has been utilized in the following analysis.

Marital status of these 10,783 women is as follows: 8,189 women are reported to be married among whom 7,632 have married only once and 557 have married twice or more often. The number of women reporting as widows is 2,594. Out of the 2,594 widows, 2,338 are widowed only once and 256 are widowed twice or more often. In other words, among the total of 10,783 ever-married women, there are  $557 + 256 = 813$  women who have married at least twice;  $2,594 + 557 = 3,151$  women who have experienced at least one widowhood and  $256 + 1 = 257^2$  women who have

<sup>1</sup> Dandekar, K., *Demographic Survey of Six Rural Communities*, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, Publication No. 37.

<sup>2</sup> One woman out of these 257 is a woman remarried after two widowhoods and hence is included in this category.