

HOUSEHOLDS IN WEST BENGAL AND THEIR HEADSHIP (1951)

KUMUDINI DANDEKAR and D. B. UNDE

THERE are no data available for household as a unit in any of the censuses in India prior to 1951. The data in the earlier censuses provide occasionally the number of households and the total population in them so that the average size of households can be calculated for broad regions. But there too, the terms house and household are often confused and the data consequently become defective. It was only in the Census of 1951 that some data regarding households were gathered and presented in the census reports. These included the size of households and their composition. The form in which the data were presented was as under:

Size of Households

No. of Members: 1 to 3 | 4 to 6 | 7 to 9 | 10 and over

Composition of Households

Heads | Wives | Sons | Daughters | Other male | Other female
relations relations

As for the size of households, the census thus provided frequency distributions of households according to their size and these were available separately for rural and urban areas of the districts, in many States of India. But, for the composition of households the composition of only average household could be obtained from the census data for rural and urban areas of the district separately. This amounted to the household not being available as a variate within the district. It could be a variate, in between the districts only. Data regarding such 'average households' do not go a long way in the classification of households. For instance, for average households one could get from the census, the number of male and female relations in the households besides the heads, their spouses and their children. It was not, however, possible to get the distribution of households, by the number of children or by the number of couples in the households. Because of this, there was nothing that could provide any idea regarding the size of certain special categories of households like those with three or more children or those with two, three or more couples which would be of much practical interest.