

than 1,000 in 1931-35, to about 2,500 in 1941, and to 5,270 in 1951. From 1952 to 1962 the annual increase was slight, as the number of divorces in the latter year did not exceed 6,800. However, after 1963 the increase was particularly large, and in the five years to 1968 the number of divorces rose from 7,686 to 11,343.

Relating the number of divorces in one year to the total number of married women in the population produces a slightly different picture. The number of divorces per 100,000 married women rose from 33 in 1921 to 52 in 1931 to 105 in 1941 and to 173 in 1951, stabilizing at that point and even decreasing slightly to 166 in 1962. Since then, the increase has been sharp and the number of divorces per 100,000 married women reached 185 in 1963 and 248 in 1968.

A more refined analysis can be produced by relating the divorces of a given year to the cohorts of marriage from which they originated. This permits the calculation, for a given year, of the proportion of marriages which would eventually end in divorce if the conditions existing during that year were to remain constant indefinitely. Such an analysis gives a trend of the probability of divorce almost identical to that obtained by relating the annual number of divorces to the number of married women. About one marriage in 100 would have been dissolved by divorce if the conditions of 1921 had remained constant. This probability rose to between 1 and 2 in 1931, to between 3 and 4 in 1941 and to 5 in 1951, staying at that level until 1962. The advance since that time has been sharp and figures for 1968 indicate a divorce probability of about 8 per 100 marriages or about one marriage in 12 that will eventually end in divorce. This last increase is probably related to the high proportion of early marriages during the postwar period. In other words, the probability of divorce would in all likelihood have been lower in 1968 had the average age at the time of marriage not gone down during that period.

Legislation in effect since 1968 has led to a considerable increase in the number of divorces. From the figure of 11,343 in 1968, the number of divorces rose to 26,093 in 1969, 29,775 in 1970 and 29,626 in 1971 (Table 5.55). The very small proportion of rejected petitions confirms the irreversibility of marriage breakdown, and the role of the courts in this instance seems limited to legalizing an already existing state. On the basis of the number of divorce decrees handed down, the probability rate of divorce in 1969 would be 20%, and that of 1971, 23%, or nearly one marriage in four that would eventually be dissolved by divorce. These figures very likely over-estimate the long-term trend since a disproportionate number of divorces were granted to couples married for more than 20 or even 30 years and who were probably unable to obtain a divorce under previously existing legislation. However, it is impossible to estimate the proportion by which these divorces exceed the norm and it may be necessary to wait several years before making a judgement on the long-term probability of divorce. Such a rate would in all likelihood be higher than the 1968 rate, but comparisons are not valid over time since the frequency of divorce depends on both the degree of stability of a marriage and the nature of the legislation in effect.

Although it is still too early to talk about stabilization because the legacy of pre-1968 conditions still influences the annual number of divorces, an analysis of the characteristics of divorced couples offers some opportunity to gain information on certain aspects of divorce that are still unknown and which are, moreover, less affected by legislation. Such an analysis would be mainly demographic. In addition, it would concern itself only with divorces granted under the new legislation, that is 21,964 in 1969, 29,168 in 1970 and 29,605 in 1971.

**Grounds for divorce.** Prior to 1968, adultery was, with very rare exceptions, the only grounds for divorce. The new legislation provided 16 justifiable grounds for divorce: adultery, sodomy, bestiality, rape, homosexual act, subsequent marriage, physical cruelty, mental cruelty, imprisonment for aggregate period of not less than three years, imprisonment for not less than two years on sentence of death or sentence of ten years or more, addiction to alcohol, addiction to narcotics, whereabouts of spouse unknown, non-consummation, separation for not less than three years and desertion by petitioner for not less than five years. One or more grounds may be cited in any petition, but in such cases it may be sufficient to establish proof of only one of those named to obtain a divorce. In almost three quarters of the petitions filed only one is mentioned. Most frequent, in descending order, are: separation, adultery and desertion. The reasons given most frequently when multiple grounds appear in the divorce petition are physical and mental cruelty, adultery and cruelty, and adultery and separation. Table 5.56 shows that for divorces as a whole, the proportion of cases involving adultery has risen from