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FACTSHEET



POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The age-sex structures have changed significantly during the past three decades in Viet Nam, particularly over recent years. Therefore, national and local socio-economic development policies and plans should integrate these changes in order to cope with challenges and take advantage of opportunities caused by the demographic transition for the benefits of the country's development.

- As the fertility rate was low and stable during the last 15 years, in most provinces, the proportion of children at the age of kindergarten and primary school did not increase significantly. Thus, the national education system should focus not on increasing the number of schools but on improving the quality of education. Indeed, in planning for development of pre- and elementary schools, local authorities should take migrant children into account to prevent school and teacher shortages.
- The increasing proportion of young people aged 16-30 (defined by the Youth Law) in the total population (25.5 per cent in 2014) suggests that Viet Nam needs to increase investment in youth development and to support their contributions to the development of the country.
- Viet Nam is in the "demographic window of opportunity" stage, but its benefit does not come

automatically. In order to continue to take advantage of this demographic bonus it will be critical to have appropriate strategies to expand employment opportunities and develop a quality labour force through investment in health, education and technical training, as well as business environment improvement.

- Population projections show a growing proportion of older persons in the coming years. Other evidence shows that a large number of older people, many of whom are economically dependent, have chronic diseases. Hence, social and health insurance policies should be developed or revised to adapt to these trends, including building medical facilities to provide health care for old-aged populations. Raising the retirement age, particularly for women (currently 55), and managing pension funds can also be effective measures to ensure sustainability of old-age social security.

- The proportion of older people living alone has increased over time, requiring more social services to accommodate the needs of this vulnerable group. Government bodies responsible for social security, social insurance, retirement and the health care system, should be ready for these demographic changes, which will only be amplified in the future. Specific old-aged programmes should be developed, especially for those who are poor and live in rural areas.
- In addition, more work is needed to prevent an increase in the sex ratio at birth imbalance. Recommendation is to eliminate income gap between men and women and balance the division of unpaid work and care work between men and women.
- The changes in population structure varied remarkably across sub-population groups and geographical regions. Therefore, policies on population, marriage, family and socio-economic development, should correspond to diversified demographic, socio-economic and cultural features across Viet Nam.

MAIN REFERENCE:

GSO and UNFPA (2016). The 2014 Viet Nam Intercensal Population and Housing Survey - Population Sex-age Structure and Related Socio-economic Issues in Viet Nam. Viet Nam news agency publishing house.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND IN VIET NAM

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THE AGE AND SEX STRUCTURE OF VIET NAM'S POPULATION: EVIDENCE FROM THE INTERCENSAL POPULATION AND HOUSING SURVEY 2014

This factsheet presents key highlights of changes in population age and sex structure in Viet Nam, using the data from two Viet Nam Population and Housing Censuses, conducted in 1999 and 2009 and the Intercensal Population and Housing Survey (IPS 2014). The factsheet also includes policy implications and recommendations on how Viet Nam should address both opportunities and challenges brought about by its population dynamics in the development and implementation of social and economic policies, and programmes.

Age and sex are two of the most important demographic factors that affect Viet Nam's economy and population health. In particular, the population age-sex structure helps shape the country's labor force, affects its production efficiency, economic growth rate and GDP, and defines the required scope of social insurance (Bloom et al., 2011). Hence, evidence on changes in population age-sex structure should be important inputs for designing and implementing socio-economic policies and strategies at national, local and sectoral levels, including the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) for the 2016-2020 period.

Facts and Figures

- The proportion of young people aged 16-30 (as defined by Youth Law in 2005), was 25.5 per cent, an increase of 2.3 per cent since 2009.
- Viet Nam is in the first quarter of the population bonus period. As of 1 April 2014, 52 out of 63 provinces had reached the demographic window of opportunity, nine provinces increase from 2009.
- By 2014, for every 100 people under the age of 15, there were about 43 people aged 60 and older.
- The percentage of older persons living alone accounted for 3.2 per cent of people aged 60 and older, and 16.4 per cent of those aged 80 and older.
- In 2014, approximately 32.4 per cent of people, aged 80 and older, were living alone with the lowest housing conditions. This figure was only 3.1 per cent for the group with the highest living conditions.

KEY FINDINGS

1. The population age-sex structure reflects demographic transition in Viet Nam

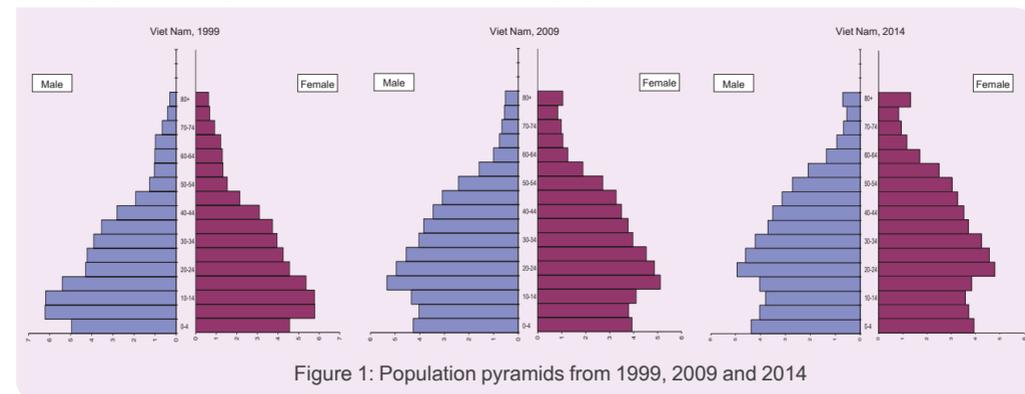


Figure 1: Population pyramids from 1999, 2009 and 2014

Population pyramids reflecting a change in age-sex structure show that Viet Nam has experienced various phases of demographic transition over the last three decades. While the population pyramid of 1999 is typical of a demographic transition when both fertility and mortality rates dropped quickly, the population pyramid of 2009 is relatively typical for a population at a later stage of demographic transformation, with low fertility and mortality and in the early stages of population ageing. Demographic consequences of war on the age pyramid have become less apparent, only discernible in populations aged 60+. As fertility and mortality rates have stabilized at low levels in the last decade, the country's population pyramid for 2014 reflects an ageing population.

Due to fertility decline over the past 15 years (1999-2014), the proportion of the population aged 0-14 fell substantially from 33.1 per cent in 1999, to 24.5 per cent in 2009 and 23.5 per cent in 2014, while the working-age population (aged 15-64) increased from 61.1 per cent in 1999, to 69.1 per cent in 2009 and plateaued at 69.4 per cent in 2014. The size of this population increased by 16.1 million, from 46.7 million in 1999 to 62.8 million in 2014, unleashing a potential labor force for economic development of the country.

Age structure changes have caused a considerable decline in the total dependency ratio¹ from nearly 90 in 1979, to less than 44.8 in 2009 and 44 in 2014. The most significant attribute of this decline is an almost parallel, if somewhat slower, decrease in the child dependency ratio², while the old-age dependency ratio³ increased only slightly (Figure 2).

The overall sex ratio of the population in Viet Nam increased over the last decades. In 2014,

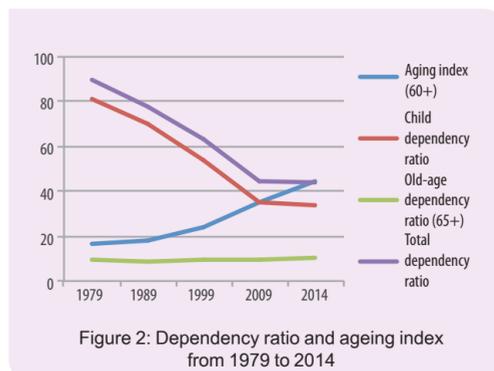


Figure 2: Dependency ratio and ageing index from 1979 to 2014

this ratio was 97.3 males per 100 females. The sex ratio in rural and urban areas was 98.8 and 94.3, respectively. Migration and difference in life expectancy were the primary reasons for the difference in sex ratio between the urban, rural and regional populations. The sex ratio of the old-age population of 60+ years was relatively low due to higher male mortality, caused by wars over 35 years ago. This is particularly true of the ratio for the 80+ category, which was 52 in 2014. The sex ratio among children aged 0-4 was high (111.2).

Out of the 63 provinces and cities, 24 had a high sex ratio above 110 for children aged 0-4. This recent demographic phenomenon has been caused primarily by an imbalanced sex ratio at birth (SRB) during the previous ten years, and will translate into a sex-ratio imbalance of future adult generations. Such a "deficit" of adult women could lead to severe social, cultural, and economic problems, and an increase in gender-based violence in the future.

¹ The total dependency ratio is the sum of the child dependency ratio and the old-age dependency ratio.

² The child dependency ratio is the average number of people aged under 15 per 100 people aged between 15 and 64.

³ The old-age dependency ratio is the average number of people aged 65+ per 100 people aged between 15 and 64.



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Viet Nam is now in the so-called "demographic window of opportunity" or "population bonus" period, meaning the number of working-age people is double that of dependent people. In other words, for every two or more people in the workforce, there is only one dependent person. As of 1 April 2014, 52 out of 63 provinces already reached this period, a nine provinces increase from 2009. This population bonus could be turned into population dividend if appropriate policies are developed and implemented to take advantage of this opportunity.

2. The population age-sex structure varies widely by geographic area and population group

Analysis of IPS 2014 data also shows that fertility, life expectancy and migration had a strong impact on the age structure, with differentials across geographic areas. More children, under the age of 15, and older persons, above 60, are living in rural areas than urban areas. Also, the proportion of older persons living alone was higher in rural areas (3.8 per cent) than in urban areas (1.8 per cent), and this could be attributed to a higher rate of rural-urban migration among young people.

The Southeast region had a large migration inflow of young people, as well as the highest share of the population aged 15-64 (73.5 per cent), whereas the Northern Midlands and Mountains, and the Central Highland regions, had the highest fertility rates and the highest proportion of children aged 0-15 (26.5 per cent and 29.0 per cent, respectively). The Mekong River Delta and the Red River Delta experienced low fertility and large migration outflow. These regions had the highest proportion of the

Data analysis shows a negative relationship between the total dependency ratio and the average income per capita of provinces and cities in Viet Nam. The dependency ratios of provinces with high average income per capita were lower than those with low income per capita, and vice versa. In other words, provinces in the population bonus phase tend to have higher per capita incomes.

population aged 65 and older, 8.9 per cent and 6.8 per cent, respectively. In addition, the North and South Central Coast region had high level of out-migration, which resulted in a very high proportion of the population aged 65 years and above (up to 8.2 per cent).

Among the ethnic groups, the Mong had the highest fertility rate (3.65) and the highest proportion of children aged under 15 years, accounting for 42.5 per cent of the Mong population. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Kinh had the lowest fertility rate (2.02) and the lowest proportion of children aged under 15 (23.1 per cent), half the rate of the Mong. In addition, ethnic groups with a lower mortality rate typically had a higher proportion of people aged 65 and older. Notably, the Kinh had the lowest mortality and the highest proportion of people aged 65 and above (7.5 per cent), while the Mong had the highest mortality rate and a lowest proportion of people aged 65 and above (3.2 per cent).

3. The population age structure of Viet Nam in 2014 has a typical ageing shape

The ageing index of Viet Nam has been increasing rapidly over the last 35 years. In 1979, for every 100 people aged under 15, there were approximately 17 people aged over 60. Twenty years later (1999), this index increased by 1.5 times. The 2014 ageing index was three times as high as 1979. Among 10 ASEAN countries, Viet Nam's population ageing index ranks third, following Thailand and Singapore. The increase of its ageing index reflects an improvement in the health and life expectancy of the Vietnamese people. However, it also poses challenges for the provision of old-age pensions and care.

Figure 3 shows the U-shaped relationship between the ageing index and the average income of the provinces. In general, the poor provinces had a relatively low ageing index, probably because these provinces had higher fertility rates and thus more children. The provinces with high living standards also had a low ageing index, but this was due mainly to higher in-migration of young people.

Age had a positive correlation with the probability of living alone. The higher age is, the higher probability of living alone is. The percentage of older persons living alone was, reaching 3.2 per cent among people aged 60 and older, and 16.4 per cent among people aged 80 and older. The percentage of people aged 80 and older in rural areas (18.2) was higher than in urban areas (11.3) (Figure 4).

Older women were more likely to live alone than older men as women often lived longer and were unlikely to re-marry after divorce or a spouse's death, compared to men. In addition, IPS 2014 data indicate a correlation between older persons living alone and living conditions of households. Approximately 32.4 per cent of older persons, aged 80 and older, who belonged to the group with the lowest living conditions, lived alone in 2014. This percentage was only 3.1 per cent for the group with the highest living conditions. These results suggest that policies to support older people living alone should focus more on low-income groups.

Kinh people had a higher proportion of elders living alone than other ethnic minorities. This is primarily because the migration rate of Kinh people was higher than that of other ethnic minorities. Also, because of migration, rural areas tended to have a higher rate of older people living alone than urban areas; young people migrated to urban areas and left older people behind.

There is a correlation between living alone and education level. The percentage of university or college graduates living alone was lower than the rate among people with lower levels of education. It is suggested that higher education might ensure

income to cover living costs of older people during their retirement and that they would be more likely to live independently, without relying on their children.

The difference in the ageing index between urban and rural areas in Viet Nam is not significant. Among the six socio-economic regions, the Red River Delta had the highest ageing index, followed by the North and South Central Coast, and the Mekong River Delta, while the Central Highlands and the Northern Midlands and Mountains had the lowest ageing index values.

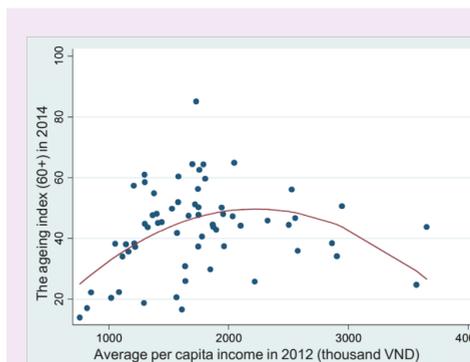


Figure 3: The ageing index (60+) and average income of provinces, Viet Nam, 2014

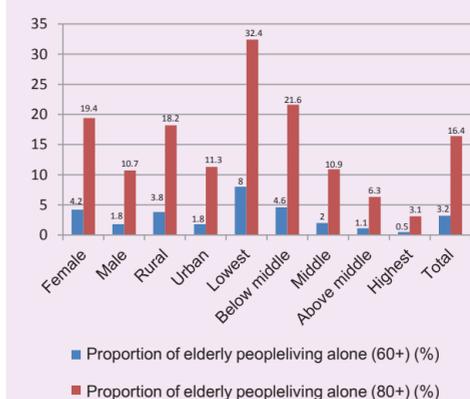


Figure 4: Proportion of older persons living alone by housing living condition