VIETNAM POPULATION PROJECTIONS 2019–2069

Population projections are an important source of information for the process of planning and budgeting for socioeconomic development strategies at all levels and in all sectors in Viet Nam. This factsheet provides some key projections about the size and structure of Viet Nam’s population up to 2069, estimated based on the data from the 2019 Population and Housing Census, and assumptions of population change (e.g. fertility, mortality and migration) for the next 50 years. It also proposes policy recommendations for addressing future population changes.

KEY FINDINGS

1. POPULATION SIZE

The population of Viet Nam on 1 April 2019 was 96.2 million. In the initial period of the projection, there is almost no difference in population size between different projection scenarios (*), reaching 100 million by 2023 and 104 million by 2029. However, differences emerge in later years. By 2039, the population size in three different scenarios is projected at 109.6 million (low variant), 110.8 million (medium variant) and 111.6 million (high variant). By 2069, the end of the projection period, the population size of Viet Nam is projected at 111.1 million (low), 116.9 million (medium) and 122.0 million (high). Thus, within 50 years, from 2019 to 2069, Viet Nam’s population under the low, medium and high variants will increase by 14.4, 19.4 or 23.7 per cent, respectively.

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1. The projection provides 03 scenarios of population change, based on 03 assumptions of fertility rate change (medium, low, high) 01 assumption of death and 01 assumption of migration. The factsheet presented the results of the medium-fertility variant.
2 URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION

Viet Nam is projected to have 50 per cent of the population living in urban areas by 2030, under the medium variant. By 2069, the proportion of the population living in urban areas will rise to 64.8 per cent.

Figure 2: Population size by rural and urban, 2019-2069, medium variant

3 POPULATION PYRAMID

Figure 3: Population Pyramids by year 2019, 2039, 2069, medium variant

Viet Nam’s population pyramid in 2019 shows that Viet Nam is currently in the demographic window of opportunity. In this period, the proportion of the population of working age (especially the age group 25–39) reaches its maximum, which allows the country to tap into the “demographic dividend.” At the same time, it shows that Viet Nam is also in a period of population ageing.

In addition, the higher proportion of elderly women than that of men shows the feminization trend in elderly population.

In 2039, the population pyramid begins to narrow at the middle and the bottom. In particular, the bars at the top of the pyramid corresponding to the population group aged 65 and over are enlarged in comparison to the bars of the same position in 2019. This population shift indicates that the country will have ended its period of the demographic window of opportunity, with people aged 65+ accounting for a relatively large proportion of the population.

Viet Nam’s population pyramid in 2069 shows a narrowing bottom, reflecting declining fertility. The widening top of the pyramid is significant: it means that the proportion of the population aged 80 and over accounts for the highest number compared with other age groups. This is the period when Viet Nam is expected to have entered into the “super-aged” population, transitioned from the “aged” population. The trend of feminization in the older population is still clearly observed, especially in population aged 80+.
In 2007, Viet Nam entered a period of a demographic window of opportunity, when the proportion of children (aged 0–14) was less than 30 per cent, while the proportion of the elderly population (aged 65 and over) was less than 15 per cent. This is the period when Viet Nam has a large working age population (15-64) twice as high as the dependent age group (under 15 and 65 and older). By 2039, the period of the demographic window of opportunity will end in Viet Nam.

Currently, Viet Nam is in the period of population ageing. Under the medium variant, Viet Nam will begin its aged population period starting from 2036, when the proportion of the population aged 65 and over will reach 14.2 per cent. From 2036 to 2039, Viet Nam will continue to experience a demographic window of opportunity and at the same time will enter the aged population period. Viet Nam’s aged population period is projected to last for 20 years from 2036 to 2055. After this period, from 2056 to 2069, Viet Nam is projected to have a super-aged population structure, with the proportion of people aged 65 and over accounting for over 21 per cent of the population.

Under the medium variant, the group of people aged 60 years and over in Viet Nam is projected to increase rapidly, from 11.4 million in 2019 to 17.3 million in 2029 and reaching 22.8 million in 2039. By 2069, the older group population size is projected to total 31.7 million. The trend of feminization among the older population group is continuously maintained throughout the projection period.

In addition, in the first 10 years of the projection period from 2019 to 2029, the number of people aged 80 years and over who need special care will be around 2 million. After the year 2030, the population of this age group begins to increase sharply, from 2.2 million in 2030 to 5.5 million in 2050, and reaching 8.8 million in 2069. After 40 years, from 2029 to 2069, the elderly population aged 80 and over will have quadrupled in Viet Nam.
WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE (15 TO 49 YEARS)

During the first 15 years of the projection period, the female population of reproductive age (15 to 49 years) tends to increase slightly, from 24.9 million in 2019 to 25.2 million in 2024 and peaks in 2031 at 25.9 million. After this period through the end of the projection period, the number of women of reproductive age gradually declines to 23.8 million by 2069.

The number of women aged 25-39 years, which is the highest fertility age cohort, is projected to decrease and bottom out in 2034. In this period, the number of women aged 25–39 is projected to decrease by 2.2 million, with an average of nearly 150,000 persons per year. After 2035, the size of the female population aged 25–39 is however projected to increase slightly and start to stabilize.

CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE

During the full projection period 2019 to 2069, the population aged 0–5 seems to follow the pattern similar to that of women aged 25 to 39 as above. In the first 15 years, the size of the population aged 0–5 decreases sharply, from 9.5 million in 2019 to 8.4 million in 2034. In the following 20 years, this age group is projected to increase again and peaks in 2043, with 8.8 million. However, it is projected to decrease and remain relatively stable until the end of the projection period.

CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE

In the initial years of the projection period from 2019 to 2024, children of primary school age decline slightly from 8.2 million in 2019 to 8.1 million in 2024. At the same time, the number of children of lower and upper secondary school age is projected to increase sharply, from 9.6 million in 2019 to 11.1 million in 2024, indicating an increase of 1.5 million over five years.

In the period from 2024 to 2029, the number of children of primary school age is projected to decrease sharply, from 8.1 million to 7.3 million; the population of lower secondary school age falls slightly, from 6.6 million to 6.4 million; and the population of upper secondary school age continues to increase sharply, from 4.5 million to 5.3 million. After 2030, the populations in the age groups of all three educational levels begin to have similar changes and remain relatively stable in size until the end of the projection period.
Population of college and university age (from 18 to 22 years of age) grows slightly from 6.4 million in 2019 to 8.6 million in 2034. Over 15 years, the population in this age group increases by 2.2 million. After this period, the population of college and university age gradually decreases and starts to stabilize from 2039 to the end of the projection period.

The working-age population is comprised of males aged 15–62 and females aged 15–60. In the first decade of the projection period, Viet Nam’s working-age population increases sharply from 63.1 million in 2019 to 68.1 million in 2031, with an average annual increase of 400,000 persons. This represents the demographic window of opportunity as explained above. After 2031, the number of persons entering the working age continues to increase, but at a slower rate, with an average annual increase of 100,000 persons in the period 2031 to 2040. The working-age population is projected to peak at 69.1 million in 2040, when Viet Nam ends its demographic dividend era. It then decreases to 66.2 million in 2056 and remains stable at that level until the end of the projection period.

3. According to the Labour Code, 2019, male working age is 15–62 year while female is 15–60
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The population projection shows that, under the medium variant, if fertility in the period 2019 to 2069 remains stable at around 2.0 children per woman, Viet Nam's population size will continuously increase to the end of the projection period, although this increase will gradually decline each year. Under the low variant with a decreased fertility at 1.85 children per woman, the population size will still continue to grow until 2055 and then gradually decline and enter a population decrease period.

2. According to the population projection under the medium variant, the proportion of urbanization of Viet Nam is 50 per cent by 2030, which is in line with targets set in the National Socio Economic Development Strategy for 2021 to 2030. Thus, urban development plans should take into account of the projected population increase in order to assure sustainable and green development in urban areas.

3. In the next 10 years, number of women of reproductive age continues to rise. As such, it is necessary to continue to strengthen policies and programmes in assuring universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for adolescents and youth. It is also important to fully implement the principles of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) which Viet Nam signed up to, that emphasizes the importance of individuals and couples to decide freely and responsibly the number, timing and spacing of children.

4. By 2029, the number of children of primary school age will decrease sharply. The number of children entering lower secondary school age will increase significantly in the first five years, but then slightly decline in the next five years while the number of children entering upper secondary school age will jump up sharply. Therefore, the general education development plans at all levels in the next 10 years should be flexible and suitable to meeting the needs of the population at each schooling level.

5. The population of college and university age continues to increase in the first 15 years of the projection period. In addition to investment policies to improve quality of public education and training, policies and programmes should take into account of expanding types of training, including vocational training and distance/online learning to meet the increasing demand of the labour market in the digital era.

6. Viet Nam is still in a demographic window of opportunity to harness the demographic dividend. For the next 10 years, there will be an abundance of young labour force in Viet Nam. The Government should continue to invest in human resources through its policies on education, training, and skills development, so as to meet the needs of the labour market in the new era and improve labour productivity. The Government also needs to strengthen its policies on health services, including sexual and reproductive health care, for the young labour force to take maximum advantage of the demographic dividend for socioeconomic development.

7. Viet Nam will shift from the “population ageing” period to the “aged population” period in 2036. Early action is needed in order to prepare the necessary conditions and socioeconomic development policies for responding to population ageing. Such measures include providing social security for the elderly population group, encouraging the elderly’s participation in economic development, and offering long-term care for the elderly, particularly those aged 80 years and over, and older women. These policies will contribute to improve the quality of life for the growing population of older persons in the coming decades.

Note: (*) The population projection provides three scenarios, based on the assumption for three components: fertility, mortality and migration as following:

- Three assumptions of fertility: Low-fertility: TFR is declining rapidly from 2.09 children/woman in 2019 to 1.85 children/woman in 2069; Medium-fertility: TFR is declining slowly from 2.09 children/woman in 2019 to 2.01 children/woman in 2069; High-fertility: TFR is stable and will reach the replacement level of 2.1 children/woman at the end of the projected period, 2069. At the same time, the fertility pattern does not change during the projected period. The fertility change scenario also provides an assumption about the change in the sex ratio at birth (SRB). Accordingly, the SRB will gradually decrease and reach 109 boys/100 girls in 2039, and 107 boys/100 girls in 2059, then maintain that level until the end of the projected period.

- One assumption of mortality: life expectancy at birth for males increases from 71.0 years old in 2019 to 77.2 years old in 2069, and from 76.3 years old to 81.9 years for females, respectively. Life table models remain unchanged throughout the projected period from 2019 to 2069.

- One assumption of migration: International migration is zero because the respondents of the census are Vietnamese citizens (i.e. those who live and study both inside the country and abroad). The number of foreigners residing as nationals in Viet Nam is too small to affect the population size of the country. In addition, assumptions of internal migration as well as the urbanization process through different periods are also studied and presented in the report.