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CULTURE, SPORTS  
AND TOURISM**

**GENERAL  
STATISTICS  
OFFICE**

**UNICEF**

**INSTITUTE FOR  
FAMILY AND  
GENDER STUDIES**

**RESULT OF NATION-WIDE SURVEY ON  
THE FAMILY IN VIET NAM 2006**

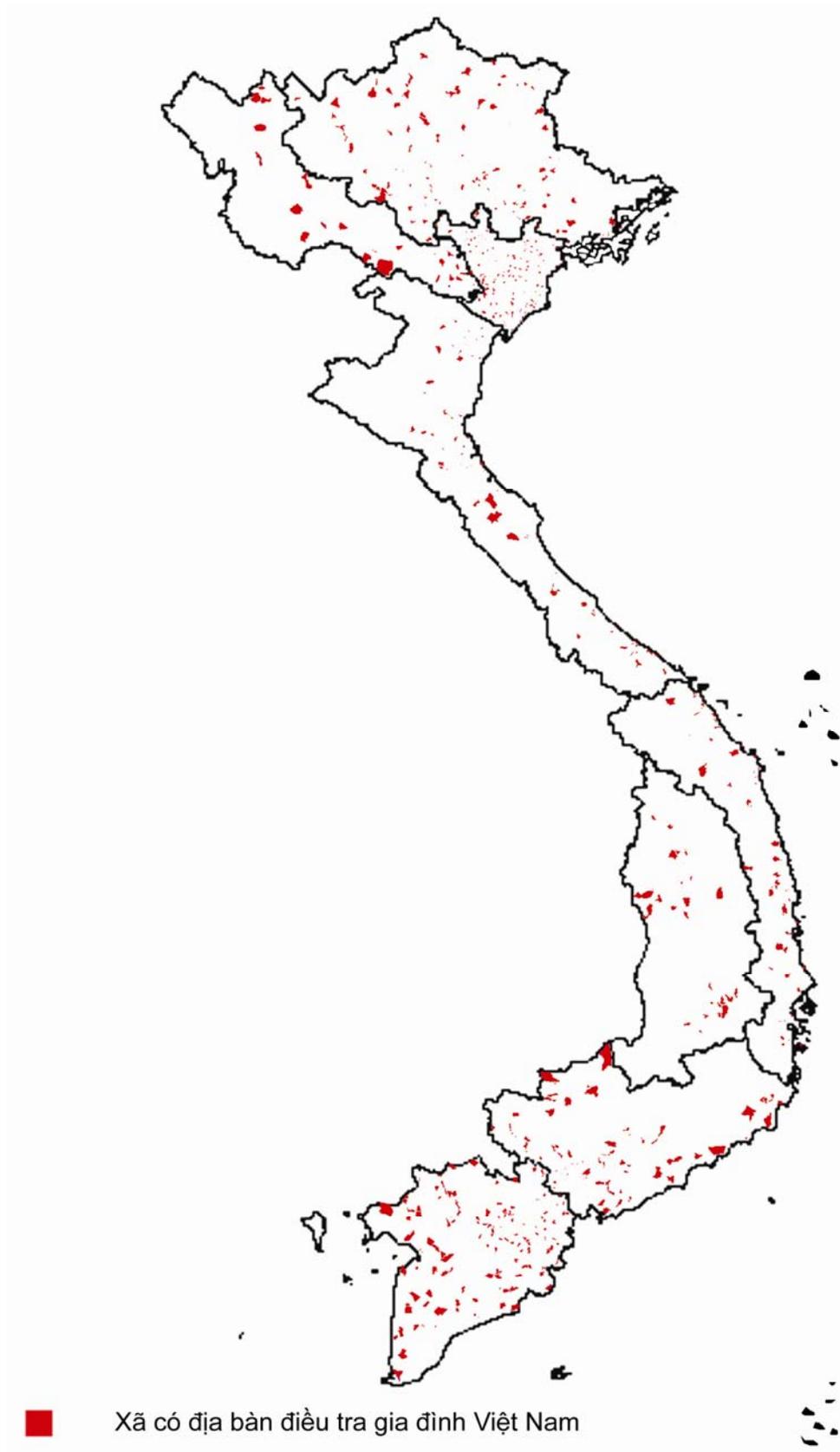
**KEY FINDINGS**

***Hanoi, June 2008***

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CPFC	Committee for Population, Family and Children
MOCST	Ministry Culture, Sports and Tourism
IFGS	Institute for Family and Gender Studies
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
GSO	General Statistics Office
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
SVF	Survey on the Vietnamese Family
SED	Social and Environmental Department
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

## MAP OF VIET NAM



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the framework of the country programme of cooperation between the Government of Viet Nam and UNICEF 2006-2010, the Viet Nam Committee of Population, Family and Children (VCPFC), now the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism have coordinated with the General Statistics Office (GSO) and the Institute for Family and Gender Studies to carry out this Survey on the Family in Viet Nam. This is the first large-scale nation-wide survey carried out in the country focusing on the four main issues of family relations, family values and norms, family economics and family welfare. It stands apart from previous surveys with its more diverse content, more intense research and more dynamic use of quantitative and qualitative research.

The collaboration has produced many important findings and results will provide a new baseline for research and policymaking as Viet Nam works toward equality and prosperity while integrating into the global economy.

We would like to sincerely thank the members of the inter-ministerial Steering Committee which oversaw the entire process of the Survey on the Family in Viet Nam, and particularly to the Viet Nam Committee for Population, Family and Children (VCPFC), the General Statistics Office and the Institute for Family and Gender Studies (IFGS). We would also like to acknowledge the positive support of local authorities at all levels, families, survey staff and survey team leaders, whose contributions were vital to the success of this survey.

We are also thankful to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) in the Government of Australia, the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and their experts, Mr. Stephen Horn and Mrs. Ruth Weston, for their technical support on sampling and the design of questionnaires.

We present this report in the hope that it will bring knowledge and data on families in Vietnam to policymakers, researchers as well as other relevant readers.

Thank you,

**Mr. Huynh Vinh Ai**

**Mr. Jesper Morch**

**Vice Minister of  
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**UNICEF Representative**

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## PART I. INTRODUCTION

### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEY

#### 1.1. Family and family studies in Viet Nam

##### *1.1.1. Importance of the family in Viet Nam and challenges*

The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam emphasises the role of family as the basic unit of society and a crucial factor in sustaining development during integration into the global economy. The Nation-wide Strategy for the Vietnamese Family from 2006 to 2010 states: “Family is the cell of society where the human race is maintained, and which is an essential environment where human dignity is formed, taught and maintained; where good traditional culture is preserved and promoted; where social evils are warned against; and where human resources are supplied for nation-wide construction and defence...Family is one of the important factors determining the solid development of society, the success of industrialization and modernization and the building of Socialism. Building a prosperous, progressive, happy and equal Vietnamese family, with a few children (each couple has only one or two children), is the motive power behind the strategy of socio-economic development in this period of industrializing and modernising the country.”

Yet in order to realise these ideals it is essential to understand current changes in the values and structure of the family in Vietnam. After 20 years of *Doi Moi*, or ‘renovation’, Viet Nam has changed in nearly all aspects of life, including in family relationships. Living standards have increased dramatically. From 1990 to 2004, gross domestic product (GDP) tripled with an average increase of 7.5 percent per year. Poor families decreased from 58 percent of the population in 1993 to 16 percent in 2006 (General Statistics Office, 2006).

Although this economic growth has benefited families, they still have to face many serious challenges including underemployment, unstable income, increased incidence of divorce, or separation, unmarried couples and domestic violence. Families also face difficulties in childcare and socialisation of children, elderly who feel lonely and helpless, tension among generations, limited access to healthcare for low-income families, child labour and child abuse, changing family relationships, and the threat of “social evils.”<sup>1</sup>

Gender inequality is a particular challenge. Where economic conditions change quickly, cultural norms and values, including those concerning gender roles, change slowly. Although Vietnamese women are fully integrated into the labour force, they still have less access to economic opportunities, education and health care, and generally still bear the greater burden of housework, childcare and elderly care. They also lack equal access to different types of occupations and jobs and their right to make significant family decisions is limited. More troubling, this lower status puts women at greater risk of

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<sup>1</sup> “Social evils” include gambling, drug use and use of/involvement in sex work.

domestic violence. All of this is occurring amid the widening gap between rich and poor and policymakers will need to find opportunities to support families to cope with these changes.

### *1.1.2. Family studies in Viet Nam*

Over the past 20 years the Vietnamese family has been the subject of many diverse studies. Yet they have been independent, infrequent and limited in scope. For example, some surveyed nuclear and extended family when looking to assess different family types without considering single-parent families, separated families and families where the partners were not married. Few study authors, meanwhile, bothered to explain their methods despite vast differences in common indicators, from age at first marriage to expected number of children to family type to labour allocation to the right to make decisions etc.. Nor did they apply their methods consistently, with the result that researchers today have difficulty choosing where to start. Still other studies covered only a limited geographical area, like the Red River Delta, and were un-systematised.

To address these issues, the Party Central Secretariat has since put greater emphasis on family research in its Directive by “promoting comprehensive family study, investigations, and surveys, especially the study of good traditional values that need preserving and new advanced values that should be acquired; studying and building the models of the families in Vietnam during industrialization and globalization; applying results from studies in solving challenges and forecasting family changes in the renovation period.”<sup>2</sup>

The Minister, Chair of the Committee of Population, Family and Children issued Decision number 765/QĐ-DSGDTE dated 30 December 2005 to establish a Steering Committee of the Survey on Families in Vietnam. The Steering Committee included representatives from the Committee of Population, Family and Children and related line ministries and agencies to organize all the preparation, study and survey on the Vietnamese family. The General Statistics Office was responsible for the quantitative research component of the survey. The Institute for Family and Gender Studies was responsible for designing the questionnaire for quantitative research in the survey and organizing the qualitative research.

This survey and the Steering Committee who guided it result directly from that new emphasis in this unique collaboration between the Viet Nam Committee for Population, Family and Children (now MOCST), the General Statistics Office, the Institute for Family and Gender Studies, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and UNICEF.

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<sup>2</sup> Directive number 49-CT/TW dated 21/02/2005 issued by Party Central Secretariat about building family in the period of industrializing and modernizing the country

## 1.2. Objectives and content

### 1.2.1. Objectives of the survey

#### 1.2.1.1. General objective

Identify the real situation of the family during industrialization, modernization and globalization in Viet Nam.

#### 1.2.1.2. Specific objectives

- a) Identify information about the real situation of the Vietnamese family as a basis for proposals on new policy.
- b) Use results to raise awareness among policymakers of opportunities to address family challenges.
- c) Provide indicators and baseline data by which to monitor family life.

### 1.2.2. Content

This survey focuses on four main areas: family relations; family values and norms; family economics; and family welfare. It focuses only on the most fundamental elements of each. For example, the focus in family relations is on spousal relations and that among generations. Included also are marriage, division of labour according to gender, contribution to family income from wives, husbands and other family members, spousal disputes and domestic violence (DV).

Concerning relations among generations, this study emphasizes the bonds between parents and young children, and between the elderly and subsequent generations. Turning to norms and values, the study then examines changes to gauge how to preserve traditional values and shape new ones. In family economics, the focus is on changes in consumption, changes in living standards, accumulating property and common financial difficulties. A family welfare segment also studies awareness among households of social services, level of use of these services, welfare for eligible households.

## 1.3. Main concepts used

### **Marriage**

Marriage is a spousal relationship after legally marrying (Law on Marriage and Family 2000).

### **Single person**

A single person is defined as a woman aged 40 or older or a man aged 45 or older who has never married.

### **Head of household**

Head of household is the person who *represents* the household in public or private affairs, and in society. This role therefore has both administrative and social significance.

It is largely based on hierarchy. The survey determines this by identifying the person whom all household members affirm as the chief decision maker.

### **Division of labour**

This refers to 'who does what' and why certain tasks fall on certain people. Wife and husband are at the centre of this issue and tasks have much to do with a long-standing sense of 'responsibility'.

### **Domestic violence**

Domestic violence is any intentional behaviour of the family members that damages the physical health, mental health or financial interest of another family member. The official definition in the recently-passed Law on the Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence includes nine behaviours.<sup>3</sup> This survey monitored actions such as beating; scolding, swearing and forced sex.

### **Elderly**

All family members aged 61 or over. Families with elderly are those with at least one member aged 61 or over.

### **Children and adolescents**

This survey groups children and adolescents and uses the two terms in parallel.

According to the 2004 Law on Protection, Care and Education of Children, a child is a Vietnamese citizen aged 16 or under and an adolescent is anyone aged 15-17.

### **Family welfare**

In this report, family welfare is understood as support received from outside the family e.g. government etc. to meet family needs. It may take the form of a cash subsidy, a pension, a disability stipend, health care assistance or disaster relief. It may also depend on dependents, young and old, or single-parent status.

## **II. SURVEY METHOD**

Researchers used study of previous materials, qualitative data analysis, quantitative data analysis and discussion with experts to form their conclusions.

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<sup>3</sup> These nine behaviors include: (1) Corporal beating, ill-treating, torturing or other purposeful acts causing injuries to one's health and life; (2) Insulting or other intended acts meant to offend one's human pride, honour and dignity; (3) Isolating, shunning or creating constant psychological pressure on other family members, causing serious consequences; (4) Preventing the exercise of the legal rights and obligations in the relationship between grandparents and grand children, between parents and children, between husbands and wives as well as among brothers and sisters. (5) Forced sex; (6) Forced child marriage; forced marriage or divorce and obstruction to freewill and progressive marriage; (7) Appropriating, demolishing, destroying or other purposeful acts to damage the private properties of other family members, or the shared properties of family members; (8) Forcing other family members to overwork or to contribute more earning than they can afford; controlling other family members' incomes to make them financially dependent; (9) Conducting unlawful acts to turn other family members out of their domicile.

## 2.1. Sampling

### 2.1.1. Quantitative sampling

The General Statistics Office chose its sampling for this study with the assistance of experts from the Australian Department of Family, Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). Researchers sought to ensure that the sampling was representative and random, both nation-wide and regionally. Enumeration areas (EA) and households were selected based on a systematic method derived from the master sample for the Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS), designed in 2001 by the GSO with support from World Bank. That master sample consisted of 3100 communes and wards in all 64 provinces/cities of the country, which were polled randomly by probability in proportion of square root of population scale. In each commune/ward three 1999 census EA were randomly selected. In all, the master sample set included 9300 EAs in 3100 communes/wards in all 64 provinces/cities.

Selection of households for the survey followed three steps:

*First step:* selection of communes/wards. Communes/wards were selected from the master sample of GSO in equal probability of a quarter. In each province/city a quarter of urban wards and a quarter of rural communes were selected. As the result, 775 communes/wards were selected, in which there were 197 urban wards and 578 rural communes.

*Second step:* selection of EAs. Two EAs within each selected commune/ward were selected, the first one was included in VHLSS 2004 and the second one was not surveyed in both VHLSS 2002 and 2004.

*Third step:* selection of households. For the first EA i.e. those surveyed in VHLSS 2004, six official households and six back-up households were systematically randomly selected from a set of 15 VHLSS-2004 surveyed households. For the second EA e.g. those included in the master sample, but not surveyed in VHLSS 2002 and 2004 six main households and six back-ups were systematically randomly selected from the list of households in the enumeration areas.

This resulted in a data set of 9300 official households and 9300 back-ups, including 2364 in urban areas and 6936 in rural areas<sup>4</sup> representing nation-wide, rural, urban areas and all 8 regions of the country. Among selected EAs and households, five of 1500 total and 50 of the original 9300 households had to be replaced due to errors or difficulties of access. In general, the proportion of replaced households was low. The random selection process of replacing households was in accordance with the rules in the research plan of survey Steering Committee.

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<sup>4</sup> Urban households surveyed actually numbered 2436, or 72 more than the initial plan. Rural households surveyed stood at 6864, 72 less than planned, because six rural areas became urban before survey.

*2.1.2. Coverage of actual sampling**Number and distribution of households surveyed**Table 1: Total number of households surveyed*

	<b>Total number of households surveyed</b>
WHOLE COUNTRY	9300
<b>Urban-Rural</b>	
Urban	2436
Inner city Hanoi, Hai Phong, Danang, Ho Chi Minh City	600
Inner city - other cities	600
Provincial towns, district towns	1236
Rural	6864
<b>Regional</b>	
Red River Delta	1920
Northeast	1332
Northwest	444
North Central	1020
Coastal South Central	864
Central Highlands	600
Southeast	1224
Mekong Delta	1896

*Actual number of respondents*

Survey staff sought one person from each age group within each household. These were adolescents (aged 15 to 17), adults (aged 18 to 60) and elderly (aged 61 or over). In addition they sought data on general household characteristics often from head of household. For each household, only one person per age group is surveyed. This included 24,079 people aged 18 to 60. Within that group, survey teams interviewed 4,548 women and 4,025 men on their present marriage, child care and their opinions concerning family. The greatest proportion was in the Mekong Delta, at 1,776 people, and the least in the northwest of the country, at 436.

Of the 4,048 people aged 61 or older, 2,664 were interviewed on their living situation and some opinions on their role in the family; 72 percent (749 people) were in urban areas and 28 percent (1915) were in rural areas; 54.7 percent (1,459) were women and 45.2 percent (1,205) were men. The northwest areas furnished only 90 respondents and the Red River Delta furnished the most, 610.

Among children and adolescents, the under-16 group accounted for 28.76 percent of respondents, children aged 7 to 14 accounted for 15.6 percent and adolescents (aged 15 to

17) accounted for 6.98 percent of the total population in 2006<sup>5</sup>. Among the 9,300 households, there were 10,491 children under 16 years old and 3,125 adolescents; 2452 of these (adolescents) received questionnaires. Just over 62 percent of households had youth under 16 and 28.5 percent had adolescents

### ***2.1.3. Qualitative sampling***

- This survey used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to gather qualitative data across the full spectrum of regions and populations in the country. Staff paid particular attention to gender as a factor and to ethnic minority groups taking care to be sure that women and men were always represented in the right proportions.

Geographic regions for this part of the survey break down as follows:

- Northern urban areas (Hai Phong city); in this data a ward is representing the city generally and a commune is generally in the suburbs.
- Northern rural areas (Lang Son Province); this included an urban ward and a commune away from the centre.
- The central region (Dac Lac Province); includes a ward in Ban Me Thuot and a commune with a large ethnic minority population.
- Southern urban areas (Ho Chi Minh City); this included a general ward representing the city and a medium ward in the periphery.
- Southern rural areas (Tra Vinh Province); this included a town in the periphery and a Kh'me ethnic area.

Within each commune or ward, survey teams conducted a total eight in-depth household interviews across all income brackets with all family members, including mother, father, adolescents and elderly. They selected households to give the full spectrum of family type from multi-generational and single-parent households to single – individual households, to those with domestic violence to those with a female head, from better off to poor families. In certain households they surveyed both wife and husband to judge differences in awareness of how to solve family problems.

Surveys also included group discussions with mothers, fathers, adolescents, the elderly and local officials. Staff also conducted in depth interviews with key informants who are in charge of culture/police/judiciary; population/family/children; the Women's Union (WU); and hamlet-village heads/residents' groups. In total this produced 240 in-depth interviews, 40 group discussions and direct interviews with 40 local officers.

## **2.2. Data collection tools**

### ***2.2.1. Questionnaires***

Questionnaires included four main parts: general information about households; interviews with family members aged 18 to 60; interviews with family members aged 61

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<sup>5</sup> Data of survey on population dynamics 2006, General Statistics Office

and older; and interviews with adolescents in the family (aged 15 to 17). In addition, the survey also collected data at the commune and ward level.

### ***2.2.2. In-depth interviews and focus groups***

In-depth interviews and group discussions chiefly addressed issues in marriage, issues in family relationships, care of the elderly, childcare and education, and issues in family welfare and services.

## **2.3. Organization of field surveys**

### ***2.3.1. Quantitative surveys***

Data collection for quantitative surveys took 67 days, from April 11th to June 17th, 2006. To guarantee consistency, GSO, CPFC and UNICEF cooperated in forming a management board to guide the process. They organised 22 survey teams of five staff each with one team leader, collaborating closely with the statistical offices and local authorities to prepare guides and travel itineraries for field work.

Data collection supervision followed a three-tier model in the field. Survey teams worked directly with respondents under the supervision of the team leader, regional supervisors monitored quality of questionnaires collected from survey teams and the management board and the national steering committee monitored the entire process. The survey took place from 11 April to 17 June 2006

### ***2.3.2. Qualitative surveys***

For qualitative data, staff carried out a pre-test survey in a randomly selected commune and ward in Yen Bai Province in August 2006. After in-depth interviews and focus groups to refine the process, they then officially began collecting data in 5 provinces/cities throughout September and October 2006.

## **2.4. Notes on using the data**

This is the first nation-wide survey ever carried out in Viet Nam on family issues. However, due to the complex nature of family issues, all the issues relating to Vietnamese families could not be addressed in the survey. Some issues, especially those related to economic issues in the family, are surveyed quite intensively in the VHLSS, so this survey did not seek data on these issues. In addition, some sensitive issues such as domestic violence, premarital sex, use of drugs, etc. are not studied intensively in this survey.

In general, findings of this survey do not put into question the results of previous work. Due to the different objectives, time of implementation and methods of collecting data, there are some differences in data for some indicators collected through other surveys such as VHLSS. This is normal in sample surveys.

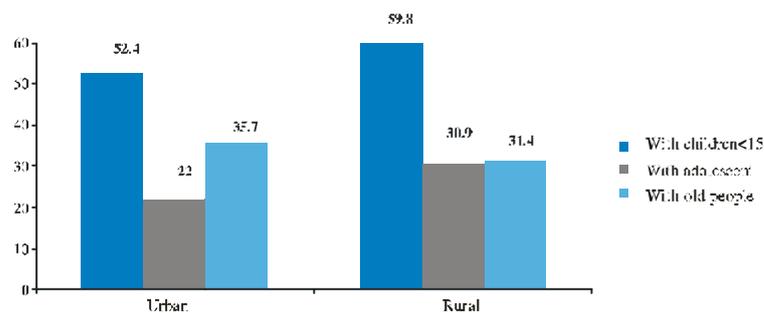
## PART II. MAIN FINDINGS AND ISSUES OF CONCERN

### I. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLDS<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.1. Size and structure of the household

- There has been no significant change in size of households over the past five years. They are about 4.4 persons per household.
- Smaller-scale households were more common in urban areas and among well-off families.
- Over half of households (57.8 percent) had youth under age 15

*Graph 1: Households with adolescents, elderly by rural and urban areas (in percent)*



#### 1.2. Number of generations in one household

- Well over half of households surveyed (63.4 percent) had two generations under one roof. Three-generation households were less common, and are decreasing, possibly due to industrialization.
- The proportion of three-generation households was higher in urban areas, particularly in the inner city. This may be due to a lack of housing in urban areas and the increasing trend among young people to migrate to the city for work and then get married.

#### 1.3. Dependency ratio

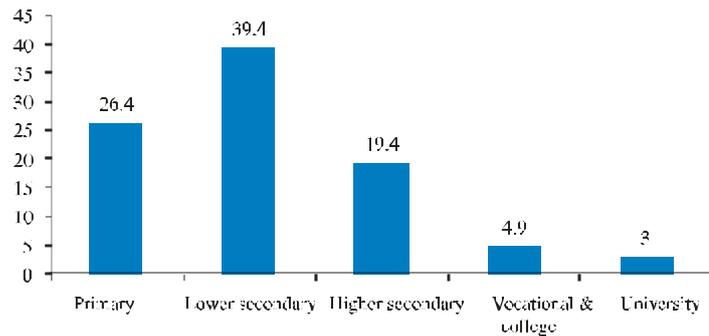
- Average number of dependents per household was 0.5, in which the proportion of dependent children under 15 was 0.3. This means that, on average, there were two working-age adults per dependant in the family, which is not a significant burden.
- The proportion of dependents in urban areas was lower than in rural areas due to smaller urban families. Low-income areas in the northwest, northern central and Central Highlands areas had a higher proportion of dependents than average and in general poor households had a higher proportion of dependents than well-off households, naturally increasing their economic burden.

<sup>6</sup> Part I and item 2.1, 2..2 in Part II were calculated basing on data of household questionnaire.

#### 1.4. Level of education

- There was 94.6 percent literacy among respondents aged 10 or older, an increase over VLSS 2002 (92,1 percent) and 2004 (93,0 percent).
- Literacy was higher among men and higher among urban dwellers. The Red River Delta had the highest rates over all and the northwest, the lowest.
- Lower-income households had fewer literate people than did higher-income households.

*Graph 2: Level of education among literate people aged 10 and older (in percent)*



#### 1.5. Structure of economic activity and occupation

- Income-generating activities have changed significantly in households, shifting away from agriculture, forestry and aquaculture and toward construction and the service industries.
- 83 percent of respondents from poor households worked primarily in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture while respondents from well-off households tended to work in construction and services.
- Simple labour accounts for 70,7 percent of the occupations of people aged 15 years and over, in which the proportion in rural areas is twice as high as in urban areas. Professional skills were more common among well-off households.

#### 1.6. Religion

- Most respondents (82.8 percent) do not belong to any religion, the proportion is higher in rural area (85.3 percent) than in urban area (75.8 percent), higher among men than among women (85.1 percent compared with 76 percent), highest in Northeast (91.7 percent), and lowest in Southeast (55.7 percent).
- Among 17.2 percent of people with religion, 7.1 percent of them are Buddhists, 0.3 percent are Protestants, 1.8 percent are Caodai believers, 6.4 percent are Catholic, 1.5 percent are Hoa Hao Buddhists. The number of people who are Muslim in Viet Nam is very small, and does not show up in this survey sample.

## II. MARRIAGE

### 2.1. Marital status

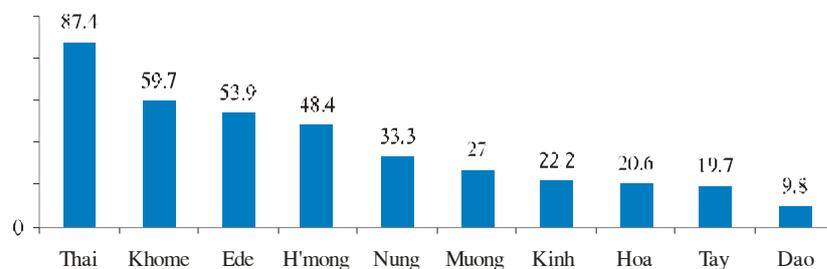
- Marriage remains very popular in Viet Nam. 60.4 percent of household family members are currently married.
- Widows outnumber widowers, especially among those aged 55 or older; 15.8 percent of men over 65 years are widowed, compared to 55.4 percent of women over 65 years. This may be attributable to health problems in older men stemming from injury or illness in past wars and generally higher mortality among men after age 55.
- 1.4 percent of respondents from 15 years and above said they were divorced or separated and the proportion of separated or divorced women was higher than that of men. Divorce was also more common in rural areas.

### 2.2 Marriage registration

*“But I am in more disadvantaged situation than others as when I married him, we did not register our marriage...I did go to his office, meet trade union director, they all said that they knew I have been his wife for many years but legally we do not have marriage certificate, so they can only intervene in issues in the office but not in our marriage.” (Woman, divorced, Hai Phong).*

- Over 80 percent of respondents aged 18 to 60 were aware of the need to register marriage. The remaining 20 percent were chiefly ethnic groups, respondents in rural areas, low-income or of lower educational achievement. Many in this group were also over 50. Unregistered marriages are highest in Cuu Long River Delta (about 40 percent), followed by the Northwest (30 percent). 46.4 percent of respondents, who do not have their marriage registered, aged 18 to 60 said they were not aware of the legal obligation to register their marriage.
- Among those aged 18 to 60 who had registered their marriages, 13.6 percent registered after the ceremony, suggesting that the social value of spousal relations takes precedence over legal recognition.

*Graph 3. Couples aged 18 to 60 without marriage certificates, by ethnicity (in percent)*



### 2.3. Age at marriage

- The average age at first marriage has increased in recent years and early marriage is decreasing. Yet the survey still found 0.6 percent of men and 3.5 percent of women aged 15 to 19 had married. This occurred in both urban and rural areas.
- Age at first marriage was higher in the cities (2,8 years for men and 2,2 for women) and among highly-skilled professionals (by about 2.9 years for men and 3.4 for women, compared with simple labour).

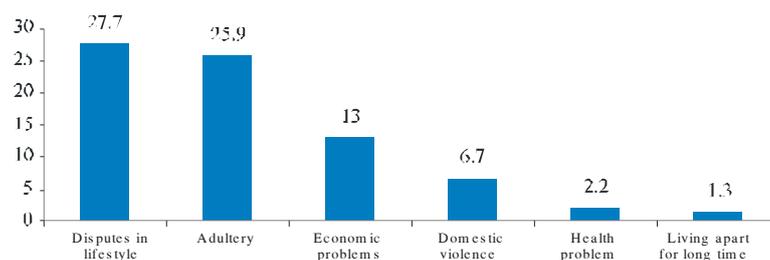
### 2.4. Times married per person

- 97 percent of wives interviewed and 95 percent of husbands interviewed on marriage answered that their present marriages were the first. More men than women had been married twice.
- Second marriages (and in some cases third or more) were more common in the Central Highlands and Southeast regions of the country, and among people of lower academic achievement.

### 2.5. Divorce/separation

- Divorce has increased rapidly in recent years, most likely because of changes in public opinions about divorce, or the increasing social acceptability of divorce. The survey found three main reasons were differences in opinion about lifestyle, adultery and economic difficulties.
- 2.6 percent of people aged 18-60 years were divorced or separated, with higher rates in urban areas compared to rural areas (3.3 percent compared to 2.4 percent). The proportion is highest in the Southeast and Mekong River Delta (about 4 percent), and lowest in the Northwest (less than 1 percent).

*Graph 4: Main reasons for divorce (in percent)*



- The survey found that the proportion of married people without marriage certificates getting divorced was substantially higher than those with marriage certificates. Data also showed that those deciding marriage by themselves, without input from parents, had a higher divorce rate than those who had sought parental guidance or who let their parents make the decision. This showed perhaps that in Viet Nam, the larger extended family still plays an important role in maintaining and reinforcing the families of the next generation.

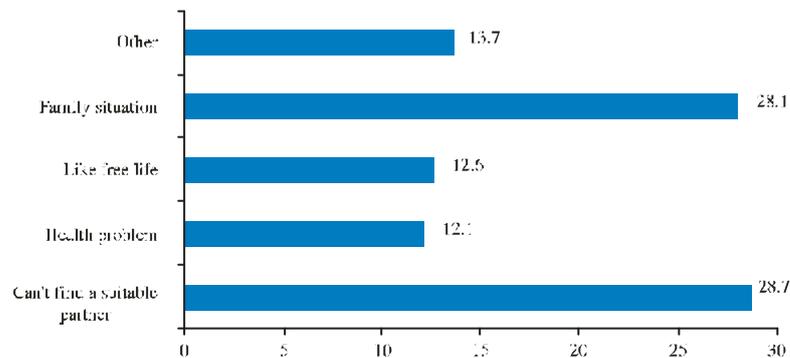
- Among divorcees, women (47.0 percent) initiated the proceedings twice as often as men (28.1 percent), revealing an increase in women's awareness of their rights.
- On average, couples who divorced did so after about nine years. This figure was lower among those of lower education and in the Southeast and Mekong River Delta areas.
- After a divorce, children typically lived with the mother (64.3 percent). The proportion of children living with mothers after divorce in poor households was higher (68.6 percent) compared to children living with mothers in well-off households (57.8 percent). The survey found that many men fail to pay adequate child support, unfairly burdening the woman and in some cases, actively creating additional difficulties for their ex-wives.

*"...after divorce, according to court decision, he had to contribute 200 kg of rice a year to his ex-wife, but he has never contributed any."* (Woman, divorced, Tra Vinh).

## 2.6. Single life

- 2.5 percent of respondents were single (unmarried women 40 or over, unmarried men 45 or over), mostly women in rural areas and in poor populations. 63.9 percent of single women lived in rural areas while 63.1 percent of single men in the cities
- Respondents listed inability to find a suitable partner or incompatible family situation as the reason. Yet 12.6 percent of those also said they simply prefer the single lifestyle.

*Graph 5: Reasons for staying single (in percent)*



- Most single people in the survey lived with their extended families and received their material and emotional support there.

## III. CHOOSING A PARTNER

### 3.1. Reasons for getting married

- Most respondents aged 18 to 60 (31.5 percent) chose "Because I am old enough" as their main reason for marrying, which suggests that it is an individual decision. Respondents typically looked to marriage as a source of material and emotional

support: 27.4 percent chose “to have a person to rely on mentally and financially” and 15.6 percent chose “so that the family is taken care of and supported.”

- The proportion of marriages arranged by parents was higher among older people, women, lower income people and people in rural areas. This means younger respondents, men, well-off people and people in urban areas were generally “more pro-active” in choosing their partners.

### 3.2. Criteria for choosing a partner

- The survey found three common criteria across the spectrum of respondents for choosing a partner. These were ‘good behaviour/conduct’, ‘good health’ and ‘good at business’.
- The survey also found that the traditional criteria of ‘good personal history’, ‘fellow-countryman’ and ‘suitable alliance’ have fallen out of favour.
- Respondents in urban areas, those of higher income, and younger people looked for “newer” criteria such as stable income and qualifications.
- ‘Good appearance’ was more common among men and younger respondents than among women and older respondents.
- The number of people over 61 years who said they did not have any “specific criteria” for choosing their partner in marriage was twice that of people aged 18-60 years (20.2 percent vs. 10.7 percent).

*“She is honest, gentle, and righteous, behaves well with neighbours, that’s why I chose her. We have been living together since then.” (elderly man, Tra Vinh).*

*“As I see, she does business honestly, she is well behaved and takes care of the family so I love her.” (elderly man, Hai Phong).*

*“If he has a stable job, the life won’t be difficult. I think as the society will be more developed, we can’t live without a job, we can’t live without money even if we love each other.” (Adolescent girl, Ho Chi Minh City).*

### 3.3. Right to decide marriage

- The absolute right of parents to decide marriage in Vietnamese traditional society has decreased significantly with social change (28.5 percent respondents aged over 61 vs. 7.3 percent aged 18 to 60). Where it does occur, it is mostly among lower-income, rural or less educated families.
- Most common was when prospective spouses and parents make the decision together. Or more specifically, prospective couples consult their parents (70.8 percent people aged 18 to 60). This trend combines both interests from

individuals and other family members, therefore it is likely to be maintained a long time in Viet Nam, especially in rural areas.

- Agreement with the notion that marriage must be approved by the parents was highest in the Mekong Delta and lowest in the northeast of the country.

*“Marriage was decided by parents because at that time, young people did not know how to love. They found a girl, considered her year of birth, reproductive health, my family was interested in her and parents of both sides met and made arrangements.”* (Elderly man, Dac Lac).

*“It is better to make own decision so we won’t regret no matter if they are happy or not.”* (Middle aged person, Dac Lac).

### 3.4. Where newlyweds live

- It is still common among respondents aged 18-60 years for newlyweds to move in with the husband's family (64.8 percent of couples lived and ate with husband's family). Yet new trends, such as living with the husband's family while eating separately (1.3 percent of couples), have emerged. Some couples also live and eat with the new wife's family (8.4 percent) or live separately (23.7 percent).
- The survey found that it was more common for urban newlyweds aged 18-60 years to have their own home (36.5 percent of urban newlyweds vs. 19.2 percent of those in rural area). The Kinh majority had the highest rate of newlyweds living separately from their families, at 25.3% compared to the Ede at 0%.
- The pattern of living and eating with wife's family is accepted by more younger people (22.2. percent, 15.3 percent, 8.3 percent and 7.2 percent for people aged 18 to 19, 20 to 24, 55 to 59 and over 60 respectively).

*“In the past, they had large land and garden, so parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren could live together in a house, and parents managed family income so it was better for children to live with parents. However, things are different now, land and house get smaller, living together is rather difficult although they can live near each other.”* (Man, 54 years old, Hai Phong).

*“there is a restriction in sentiment , for example, we have to be careful not to express our love to husband/wife when we are with parents.”* (Woman, Lang Son).

## IV. SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

### 4.1. Head of family

- Head of family is generally the family member responsible for important decisions. Most respondents said that this should be someone with “better virtue, abilities and contributions”, all of which win the respect of other family members. Actual head of family is not necessarily the person named in the household record book.

- In the modern Vietnamese family, head of family has diversified, reflecting changes in family structure. It can be wife, husband or both. However, in general survey respondents said that men are still the default head of the family.

*“I am always under the leadership of the husband now matter how good I am. Although my husband sometimes makes mistakes, I can contribute ideas and persuade him. Husband is still the one who makes important decisions in the family.”* (Woman, civil servant, Dac Lac).

*“In previous time, women only stayed at home so they did not have chances to show their abilities. Nowadays, they have opportunities to broaden their knowledge, and study more, so they can definitely play the role of heads of families.”* (Woman, farmer, two-generation family, medium economic situation, Tra Vinh).

#### 4.2. Ownership of property

- The traditional patriarchal structure of Vietnamese society means that large property is generally in the name of the man/husband, and the survey found that this largely remains true today. This naturally gives husbands the final say in significant matters. Exceptions are the Ede and Kh'mer people, who have a matriarchal structure.

*Table 2: Distribution of property title by area (in percent)*

	Urban			Rural		
	Wife	Husband	Wife and husband	Wife	Husband	Wife and husband
House, residential land	20.9	61.1	18	7.3	88.6	4.2
Farmland, forest land	15.2	76.9	7.9	8.0	87.2	4.8
Business	53.0	40.0	6.9	31.4	62.4	6.2
Car	25.0	75.0	0.0	18.2	77.7	4.0
Motorbike	12.1	67.9	20	8.0	87.8	4.2
Boat/ship	2.2	79.2	18.7	2.8	92.5	4.7

- Industrialization and urbanization are changing patterns of ownership between wife and husband and large property may now be in the name of the woman.

#### 4.3. Division of labour between wife and husband

- In the Vietnamese family, labour allocation according to gender is still common and survey data supported this. Most respondents said that the woman/wife is regarded as more suitable to work inside or near the house like domestic chores and taking care of family members and that men are more suitable to production, business and external relations.
- Where there was a more equal distribution of work between wife and husband it was generally among urban, well-off groups and more highly educated

respondents. In households with both husband and wife working outside the home, more husbands shared the housework.

**Table 3: Distribution of household work among adults (aged 18-60) in the 12 months prior to the survey (in percent)**

Type of work	Wife	Husband	Wife and Husband
Household business	27.6	36.7	25.8
Housework	82.5	3.5	3.1
Childcare	68.3	2.4	10.7
Caring for elderly/sick	46.8	9.1	29.8
Managing money	73.9	9.3	11.0
Receiving guests	17.5	46.1	29.2
Dealing with authorities	18.1	62.7	11.8

*\*The total does not add up to 100 because the housework done by others in household was excluded.*

*“I do most of the housework, I know my husband’s job is hard so I do all work like cooking, cleaning, washing clothes.” (Woman trader, Hai Phong).*

*“Doing that work (housework) now is normal, because who has more time helps the other, so the other has more time, as it is better to have more time for society, it is not important that husband just sits down after the meals, the more he can help his wife, the better it is for society.” (Man, civil servant, Hai Phong).*

#### 4.4. Decision-making

- Right to make decisions generally followed patterns in head of family and also depended on type of work. But in most cases data suggested that wives more often make decisions on everyday work involving small amounts of money and husbands often decide larger things involving larger amounts of money.
- In urban, well-off households, wives are now making more important decisions, or are sharing these decisions with the husband more often than are women in rural areas, mountainous areas and poor households.

#### 4.5. Level of satisfaction with marriage

- Just over 90 percent of respondents reported that they were satisfied with their marriages, higher than popular opinion would suggest. This strong showing may result from the fact that respondents seemed more concerned with the larger process of marriage rather than just the events of the previous year and any disputes that may have arisen. Some respondents noted: “It is good enough to live with each other up to now without getting a divorce, as arguments are unavoidable in married life.” Yet this also does not diminish the need to identify and promote behaviours that would improve family life.

- Level of satisfaction in marriage increased as wealth/income and education increased, yet these also decreased over years married. In the poorest quintile, 21 percent reported being very satisfied with their marriages, compared with 36.5 percent in the richest quintile.
- The two main reasons respondents noted for dissatisfaction in marriage were “behavioural differences” (45.3 percent) and “economic hardship” (43.4 percent). Men more often emphasised “behavioural differences” (70.6 percent of men gave this as a reason, compared to 40.5 percent of women) and women more often emphasised economic hardship (46.1 percent of women vs. 29.4 percent of men cited this reason).
- About 10 percent of those respondents reporting dissatisfaction with marriage cited “sexually incompatible” and “disloyal wife/husband” as the reasons for their unhappiness. More husbands in this group mentioned sexual incompatibility (17.7 percent of husbands vs. 6.7 percent of wives) and more wives cited adultery (by husbands) (12.4 percent of wives, 0 percent of husbands).

#### 4.6. Opinions about extra-marital and pre-marital sex

- Sex outside marriage is defined as including: single women having children; and married women/men having sex with other people if they live far away from their spouse for extended periods of time,
- Few respondents favoured the idea of men and women “co-habiting”; 1.3 percent of adolescents aged 15-17 years accepted the idea. Older groups are accepting this idea in a higher percentage, however still under 3%. They held this to be a self-indulgent lifestyle which contradicts traditional cultural values and which can “cause bad effects in many aspects for women”.
- Data also suggested that acceptance of this idea depended on the closeness of the relationship. Just under 4 percent of respondents approved of pre-marital sex in general. However, if the partners were definitely going to get married, this figure rises significantly - about 13 percent of elderly approved, about 20 percent of 18-60 year-olds, and of adolescents approved. Regardless of whether the partners were going to get married or not, the acceptance level for single women having pre-marital sex was consistently lower than that for single men having pre-marital sex.
- In general, men were more open to pre-marital sex than were women, and single respondents more often approved as well.
- Polled on the reasons for pre-marital sex, respondents cited “lack of family attention for adolescents and young people”, “lack of reproductive health education” and access to pornography.
- Most respondents disapproved of extra-marital sex, particularly the elderly and adolescents (less than 2 percent approved). Reasons for disapproval ranged from “broken family happiness” to “negative impacts on cultural tradition”. All respondents who approved of extra-marital sex were much more accepting of extra-marital sex by married men than by married women. This again revealed the imbalance, or double standard, in social attitudes towards women.

- About 9 percent of respondents 61 and over think that it is socially acceptable to be an unmarried women with a child, compared to 6.2 percent of adolescents and 8.5 percent of those aged 18-60. Acceptance was more common among those of higher age and more life experience. Married respondents, respondents in urban areas, and those with higher education tended to be more accepting.

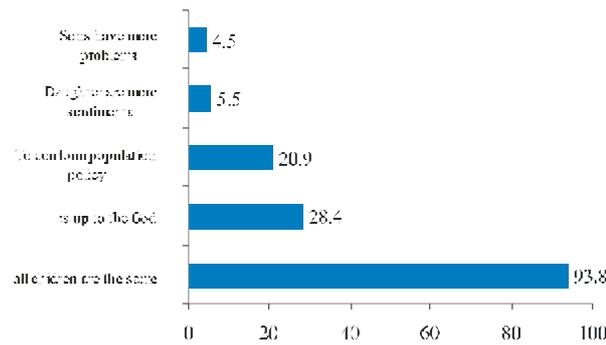
*“I think it is the same for both men and women, living like that (living together without being married) is too self-indulgent...I think that kind of life is too free.”* (Woman, Hai Phong).

*“As it is said, it will be more disadvantageous for woman...marriage certificate identifies responsibility between man and woman, if they live together without getting married, and the man leaves her, she will be at disadvantage.”* (Adolescent girl, Hai Phong).

*“My daughter must not do that (have sex before marriage). She will lose her dignity and be less respectable. There must be formal betrothal ceremony. They only get married if I approve. That way my daughter is of great worth.”* (Woman, two-generation household, Lang Son).

#### 4.7. Having Children

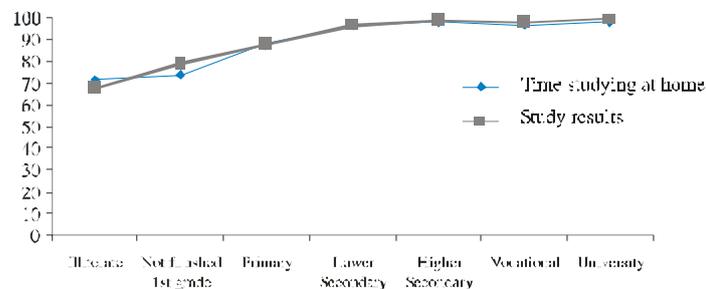
- Most respondents said that childbearing is an important function in family yet opinions on number of children have changed dramatically. Only 18.6 percent of elderly, 6.6 percent of adults and 2.8 percent of adolescents said that families should have many children. Data suggested that today families are more concerned about how to care for children properly and bring them up well. Of those preferring larger families, the majority were in rural areas.
- Nearly 37 percent of adult respondents favoured sons. This was higher among women, respondents in rural areas, and respondents in the Central Highlands, Mekong River Delta, northwest and southeast. It was also common among Dao, H'mong and Kh'me minorities. Another significant finding was that more poor people want to have sons (45.5 percent of the lowest income quintile compared to 26 percent in the highest income quintile, prompting large families amongst the poor.
- Nearly 86 percent of respondents preferring a son said it was to continue the family line. Over 54 percent also said it was to have someone to rely on in old age, and 23.4 percent said it was to have someone to do difficult work. A small but notable number of respondents cited “to have labour” (7.9 percent) and “to not be laughed at by others” (6.4 percent). In rural areas, son preference was chiefly for support in old age because few of them can use social services and health care service when they are old.
- 63 percent of respondents aged 18 to 60 rejected the idea of son preference and data analysis suggested that they were more aware of the general value of children in family life. Ultimately, most respondents placed no preference on gender of the child.

*Graph 6: Some reasons respondents gave for not maintaining son preference (in percent)*

## V. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

### 5.1. Parental concerns about children

- Most parents stated that they cared chiefly about education for their children, but their concerns are also influenced by region, area and ethnic group. More urban parents expressed concern about education than did rural parents and respondents in the northwest of the country showed less concern than that in other areas. Figures were lowest among the H'mong.
- More highly educated, higher-income parents tended to be concerned with education.

*Graph 7: Proportion of parents who knew how much time their children spent studying and what their children's study results (grades) were by parents' education (in percent)*

- Parents in the survey paid more attention to study in youth aged 7-14 than in youth aged 15-17. They gave girls and boys in this group (adolescents) equal consideration.
- Just over 30 percent of parents said they took part in choosing friends for their children. For 7-14 year-olds, over 74 percent of parents said they knew who their children's close friends were and where their children go most often with their friends. The figure was 69 percent for 15-17 year-olds.
- The proportion of parents expressing these concerns grew with income, education and degree of urbanization in their area.
- There was no difference between mothers and fathers in terms of deciding their children's friends. And parents did not appear to distinguish between girls and boys when deciding who their children's friends would be. Parents in the Red

River Delta generally participated more in this process than in other regions for both 7-14 and 15-17 years olds. This was lowest in the Northwest. Among cultural groups, Kinh, Chinese and Muong parents participated more in choosing their children's friends (about one-third of respondents from these ethnic groups reported taking part in making decisions about their children's friends), and H'mong parents participated the least, at about 3 percent. No Ede parents reported participating. Level of education was not a determinant for whether or not parents participated in choosing their children's friends for the 15-17 age group but for 7-14 year-olds, the higher the level of education in parents, the more they were involved.

## 5.2. Distribution of child care

- In very revealing findings, nearly 28 percent of mothers said that they spend at least three hours caring for children aged 15 and under while 29.6 percent of fathers reported spending less than an hour with them. And nearly 6.8 percent of mothers and 21.5 percent of fathers reported having no time at all to care for children, chiefly due to the burden of making a living.
- Mothers in rural areas spent less time taking care of children than did mothers in urban areas. For example, the proportion of mothers in urban areas taking care of children for more than three hours a day was 38.3 percent, compared to 24.7 percent for mothers in rural areas. Women in the northwest region and the Central Highlands spent the least. Women in the southeast spent the most time in childcare. Higher income respondents and those of higher education also reported devoting more time to childcare.
- Many respondents reported that a lack of nurseries and kindergartens made child care more difficult for them.

## 5.3. Socialising children

- Interviewers sought data on common problem behaviours in young people, including 'insolence' with parents, picking quarrels, fighting, skipping school/truancy, drinking, gambling, drug abuse, smoking and staying out all night without permission. More than 90 percent of adolescents reported that they had done none of these in the 12 months prior to the survey (over 90% to 94.5%), except the mistake of playing truant (77.5%); 17.3 percent said they had done at least one and 0.5 percent said they had done all of them.
- According to adolescents parents dealt with problem behaviours in youth in several different ways, including warnings and analysing right and wrong (74.2 percent), scolding (42.6 percent), giving a beating (11.2 percent), contacting the school (5.1 percent), ignoring the issue (8.8 percent), feeling upset or powerless (0.5 percent). More parents in rural areas also reported "ignoring" problem behaviour. Scolding and contacting the school did not differ markedly between the two areas. "Giving a beating" and feeling upset/powerless were more common in urban areas. "Giving a beating" was most common among the Muong group (31.8 percent), followed by the Kinh (12.7 percent).

- For daughters, parents mainly reported giving a warning, analysing right and wrong and scolding. The proportion of parents giving a warning tended to increase in proportion with income level of households.
- The majority of adolescents (70.6 percent) indicated that parents' common responses to problem behaviour are correct. Yet some youth also reported "crying and being upset" when they were scolded because they thought it unfair. Still others reported that they would "not dare to say directly" if they thought their parents' responses were unfair, while some were indifferent to their parents response. Disciplining children in inappropriate ways will create a distance between parents and children and the consequences may be more negative than positive.
- Over 85 percent of parents reported giving timely encouragement to children when they do good things or perform well at school. This was more common among parents in urban areas. Respondents said their main form of encouragement was giving compliments, which compelled the children to strive to learn more.

*"I do not impose the way old people used to educate children. Now it is more difficult to educate children than before, as now their condition is different, we have got to know well to talk to them, and give them instruction, gradually."* (Man, HCMC).

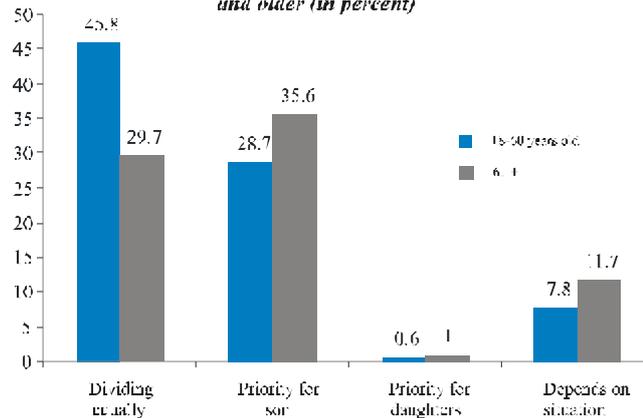
#### 5.4. Children and gender

- Division of property is an important indicator for judging parents' attitudes toward the gender of their children. This survey found that 28.7 percent of respondents in the 18 -60 group favoured the son and only 0.6 percent favoured daughters.
- Most of those who still favoured passing on property to sons were in the 61-and-over age group while most of those who said that girls were equally entitled to property were in the 18-60 group. This was also higher among urban respondents, higher-income respondents and among the more highly-educated.
- The tradition of passing on property to the eldest son has changed, as indicated by the fact that more people aged 61 and over favour passing property only to sons compared to those aged 18 - 60 years.

*"That saying (the more children, the more prosperity) of our ancestor was only correct in the past, now it is out of date...If you have many children now, you can't catch up with society, your children will be at a disadvantage."* (Man, Hai Phong).

*"Nowadays...if we have a few children, we can give them good education. It is not good at all if we have many children but cannot give them good education."* (Elderly man, Hai Phong).

Graph 8: Division of property among children by sex for respondents aged 18 to 60, and 61 and older (in percent)



- The majority of respondents reported that girls and boys have equal opportunities to study and that the opportunity to go to school depends more on innate ability rather than on gender. Basically, people have similar expectations in the roles of son and daughter.
- Parents in the survey worried most that sons would engage in socially unacceptable behaviour (38.3 percent), and next that they would not move on to the next educational level (21.9 percent). This was generally similar for daughters, although only 21.9 percent of parents worried that daughters would engage in socially unacceptable behaviour and 18.5 percent worried that they would not move on to the next educational level.
- About 11 percent of parents worried that daughters would have sex before marriage. This was four times higher than that for sons.
- The three highest expectations for daughters were getting a permanent job (75 percent of respondents), having a happy family life (56.7 percent) and high educational achievement (40.1 percent). For boys, these were 78 percent, 42.4 percent and 42.2 percent respectively.
- The proportions of parents in urban areas expecting girls and boys to have a permanent job, high degree of education, higher social status and good health were higher than that in rural areas. More parents in rural areas wanted their children to have a happy family life, be good at business and have “good morals”.
- Nearly 90 percent of respondents agreed that there should be close relations between parents and children according to hierarchy and that children should obey parents and elderly (based on different indicators). There was no clear difference between urban and rural areas.
- In general, more women than men agreed that there should be close relations between parents and children, and that children should obey parents

*“My biggest problem is economic difficulty... their study costs a lot of money. For example, I have to pay about 20 to 30 million dong a year for my children’s study, if the family does not have a stable income, how can they afford? Or example of children at high school, they have to attend official classes, extra classes, computer course...so how can their parents manage to pay for them?” (Man, HCMC).*

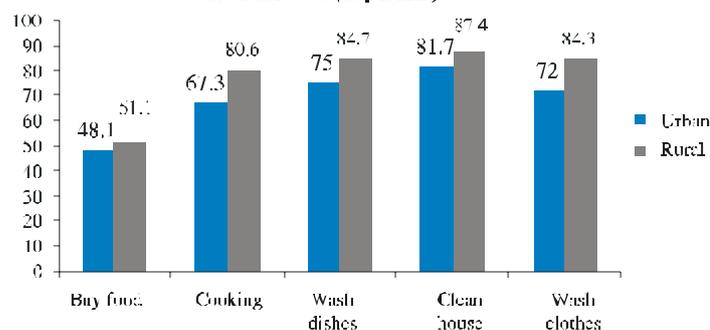
*“My parents often tell me it is important to study well, not to indulge in pleasure, it will be advantageous for me if I finish my studies...If I do not study now, I will have hard life like those adults without jobs.” (Adolescent boy, Tra Vinh).*

## VI. ADOLESCENTS IN THE FAMILY

### 6.1. Taking part in family work

- The survey revealed that it was very common for children to take part in family work, with 83.2 percent of parents in households with children aged 7-14 years saying that their children participate in at least one kind of housework (shopping, cooking, washing up, etc). This was especially the case in rural areas, with a difference of as much as 20 percent more children aged 7-14 years participating in washing dishes compared to those in urban areas. This also increased with age. For 7 - 14 year-olds and 15 - 17 year-olds, cleaning, washing up and cooking were the most common tasks and shopping was the least common.
- The proportion of adolescent girls performing all kinds of housework was higher than that for adolescent boys. For example, the proportion of girls aged 7-14 years taking part in washing cloths was 55.7 percent compared to only 29.9 percent for boys aged 7-14 years. 65.6 percent girls aged 15-17 participated in buying food compared to only 36.6 percent of boys.
- Children in better-off households took part less in family work than did children in lower-income households.

*Graph 9: Parents’ opinions/assessment about the extent of participation of children aged 15-17 in housework (in percent)*



- About a quarter of adolescents said they participate in childcare activities (29.7 percent)

and in taking care of the sick members of the family (24.8 percent). This was lowest in the northwest of the country and highest on the southern central coast.

- About 68 percent of 15-17 years old responded that they take part in some household business (although this was lower in better-off households, urban households and among those with higher education).

## 6.2. Participation in paid work

- About 25 percent of adolescents aged 15-17 years had participated in paid work. There was no difference between boys and girls but there was a clear difference based on income, education and ethnicity. Paid work for 15-to-17 year-olds increased as income level and education decreased. In the lowest income quintile of the population, 39.5 percent of adolescents had done paid work, compared to only 9.3 percent for the richest income quintile. The rate of participation in paid work is twice as high among ethnic minorities as among the Kinh and Chinese majorities (40.8 percent compared to 22.1 percent). This is especially high in the Northwest of the country, at 52.2 percent, and lowest in the Northeast (14.3 percent) and Red River Delta (15.1 percent).
- Of youth who responded that they took part in paid work, average age when this began was 14.3 years. There was no difference among regions, gender, areas, income groups, education or ethnicity.
- Most adolescents involved in paid work perform simple labour, especially in rural areas.
- On average, adolescents involved in paid labour worked for 18 hours per week yet the average for girls was higher than that for boys (20.9 hours compared to 14.9 hours).

## 6.3. Participation of adolescents in decisions that affect their lives

- About one-third of adolescents reported that their parents asked their opinion about at least one of four common issues: family business; home construction and improvement; purchase of large pieces of furniture; and dividing property, assets, land and money among children.
- There was no significant difference between sons and daughters, except in division of property.
- In households where parents asked adolescents about family issues, most responded that their opinions were “suitable to parents”, and where they differed, parents respected these opinions. This is a sign that adolescents play a positive role in contributing ideas in family life. However, the fact that only about one-third of parents even ask suggests that this is not mainstream yet.
- Over 80 percent of young respondents reported that their parents allowed them to decide at least one of seven main issues affecting their lives including choosing a

school, study time at home, extra classes/learning a trade, stopping school, employment, friends and entertainment such as travelling or sightseeing. This was lower among better-off households and urban households.

*“When family discusses some issue, they (children) are too young to make any decisions, they just follow our decisions.” (Woman, Tra Vinh).*

*“Now I only worry about my study, I can’t study very well. I just want to study better in order not to be complained by my parents.” (Adolescent girl, HCMC).*

#### 6.4. Whom adolescents talk to about issues

- Over 95 percent of adolescents reported that they talk to family and friends about their studies and about happiness, yet this dropped in matters of love (82.4 percent) and disputes with parents (76.6 percent). The proportion of adolescent girls talking to others was higher than that of boys and the trend generally increased with educational level.
- Whom adolescents talk to and how they share their feelings more depended on who was most often willing to listen, family or otherwise.
- Adolescents talk more to friends about all issues than to parents or siblings.

*.“My father does wrong when he is drunk, he just swears when he drinks. Every night, every evening, when he drinks, he steals things and we can’t stand it.” (Adolescent boy, Hai Phong).*

#### 6.5. Awareness of the Law of Protection, Care and Education of Children

- 58 percent of adolescents aged 15 to 17 were aware of the Law on Protection, Care and Education of Children; 77.5 percent had partial knowledge and 15.3 percent had heard about it but were not aware of the content. Only 7.2 percent were very familiar with the content of the Law
- Awareness of this Law was higher in urban areas than in rural areas and higher among girls than among boys. It was also higher among adolescent respondents with secondary and high school education and was generally more widely known in higher-income households.
- Adolescents’ awareness of this law was highest in the Northeast of the country (79.7 percent), followed by the Red River Delta (67.1 percent), and was lowest in the northwest (48.8 percent). Along ethnicity lines, Nung, Tay, Dao and Kinh had the highest awareness, possibly due to recent promotion of the issue in minority areas in recent years.

### 6.6. Love, sex and use of contraceptives among adolescents

- The survey found that 7 percent of adolescents aged 15-17 had a boy or girl friend, at an average age of 15.8 years, and 17.1 percent of those had taken those partners to their home to meet their parents. The survey also found that among adolescents having lovers, young women and men began to have boy/girl friends at the same age.
- The proportion of H'mong, Kh'me, Thai, Chinese and Nung adolescents having had boy/girl friends are higher, ranging from nearly 12 percent to 17 percent, compared to other ethnic groups whose proportion was 7 percent or lower.
- Only 0.23 percent of adolescents are single and have been sexually active (eight individuals), four of them boys and four of them girls. Five of these were from ethnic minority families, three were Kinh or Chinese, seven had primary or lower education and one had secondary education. Seven of the eight did not use contraceptives, saying it is “not necessary” or they “do not know how to use them”. More boys stated that they did not know how to use the contraceptives, while more girls said it was not necessary.

### 6.7. Adolescent hopes and difficulties

- Adolescents cited lack of money for expenses (21.7 percent), low learning capacity (10.7 percent) and lack of opportunity for higher education (10.5 percent) as their greatest difficulties.
- Difficulty paying expenses, lack of employment opportunities, low paying jobs, low learning capacity and lack of opportunities for higher education were twice as high in rural areas as they were in urban areas.
- Difficulty paying expenses, low paying jobs and lack of opportunities for higher education were also higher among girls than among boys.
- Over 60 percent of adolescents responded that they wanted higher education, 14.5 percent that they wanted a job and 12.9 that they wanted a job with high income. Urban adolescents were more likely than rural adolescents to seek work abroad as export labour, to seek higher education and to study abroad. Chief concerns among rural adolescents were getting a higher education, getting a job, getting a job with a high salary and “leaving the countryside”. There was no difference between boys and girls in their hopes of getting a job, but girls were slightly more likely to want to leave rural areas and to study abroad.
- The higher the income quintile the adolescents come from, the more likely they are to have hopes of studying abroad and obtaining a higher education. Only 49.5 percent of adolescents in the lowest income quintile want to obtain a higher education compared to 72.3 percent of adolescents in the highest income quintile.

## VII. ELDERLY IN THE FAMILY

### 7.1. Households with elderly

- Over 32.6 percent of households surveyed had elderly family members, more commonly in urban areas. Nationwide the distribution was highest in the northern central area and lowest in Central Highlands.
- The proportion of poor households with elderly family members in the home was significantly higher than that of well-off households (35.4 percent compared to 28.7 percent).

### 7.2. Elderly health

- Half of elderly surveyed assess themselves to have normal or better health. Men generally assessed their health as being better than women.
- Elderly in urban areas and among better-off households also tended to assess themselves as having better health.

### 7.3. Means of support and living standards

- Just over 39 percent of elderly said that their main means of support was their children, 30 percent from their own work and 25.9 percent from a pension or subsidy. Pensions or subsidies were the main means of support for elderly in cities (35.6 percent compared to 21.9 percent of elderly in rural areas) while many rural elderly still had to work (35.2 percent compared to only 17.5 percent of elderly in urban areas).
- There was little difference between urban and rural areas in younger generations supporting the elderly in the home. This suggests that even though pensions and savings in urban areas are higher than in rural areas, support from sons/daughters is still important for the elderly regardless of where they live.
- There was a substantial difference between men and women in main means of support, with 51.8 percent of women relying on family compared to 26.5 percent of men.

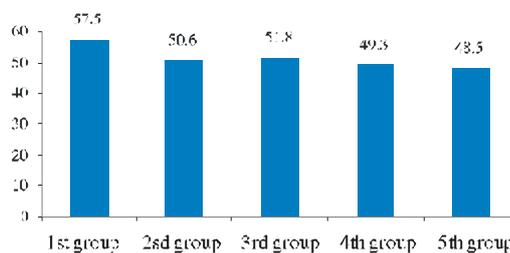
### 7.4. Choosing to live with family

- 51.5 percent of elderly surveyed stated that they want to live with their sons/daughters. This was more common in rural areas, among women and among lower income groups.
- Most elderly cited support from their families, family traditions and values, and being happy when living with their descendants as chief reasons for wanting to live with their sons/daughters.

*“I like to live with my children and grandchildren happily, they support grandparents and parents so I am happy. If I live separately, I will feel lonely, nobody takes care of me, my children cannot take care of me as much as if I live with them.”* (Elderly woman, Tra Vinh).

*“I don’t think old parents are a burden, because old parents in family are like decorative plants, making the house warmer....my two young brothers still wanted to live with my mother but I insisted on taking her home and living with me. I feel happy as I can show gratitude to my parents”* (56 year old woman, HaiPhong).

**Graph 10: Proportion of elderly wanting to live with sons/daughters by income group (in percent)**



- Nearly 68 percent of those who said elderly should live with their families believed this should be one of the sons, yet data also suggested that deciding which son to live with also depends on more practical and specific reasons than on tradition. In this case, "to help each other" was the most common reason.

### 7.5. Emotional life

- It is common in Viet Nam for younger generations to visit their elderly family members and in the 12 months prior to the survey, 95.9 percent of married people aged 18-60 living apart from their elderly parents said they had done this (more common in urban than in rural areas).
- Just over 47 percent of family members living separately also sent money or presents (of over VND100, 000 - or US\$ 6.30) to elderly family members. This was also more common among urban families (54 percent in urban areas vs. 45.4 percent in rural area) and richer families (59.6 percent from better-off vs. 35.7 percent from poor families).
- Just over 16.5 percent of elderly responded that they had the means to support their family members who live separately with money and items (worth over VND 100,000). Over 90 percent of elderly said that they support their children with at least one of the following: income and business capital; experience making family and business decisions; experience in social behaviour; helping to educate/socialise children and taking care of family; and housework and child care.
- The survey found that talking, sharing family happiness and sharing family sadness is very important to the elderly. Yet the nature of the relationship between elderly

and their children is changing. Many respondents said that now sons/daughters take better material care of parents, but have fewer visits and meetings with them; 37.5 percent of elderly said that they most often talk to their spouse when they are sad or happy, 24.8 percent talk to sons/daughters and 12.5 percent talk to friends and neighbours. Elderly women (37 percent) reported more talking to sons/daughters while men (56 percent) talked more to their wives. There was no difference between urban and rural areas. Of note was that elderly women talk less about their sadness and happiness to others compared to elderly men.

*“Previously, ... children showed more consideration for parents and contacted parents more often. Now in the market economy, children support parents better with food and clothes, but they do not directly take care of parents as much as before, because they are busy working and some even do not visit home for 2 or 3 months.” (Man, Dac Lac).*

### 7.6. Difficulties and expectations

- Many elderly (64 percent) said that they had difficulties in life at the time of the survey: 46 percent had poor health, 34 percent lacked money for everyday needs, 17.8 percent lacked money for medical care and 1.8 percent did not receive care or respect from their families.
- Elderly in rural areas had less money for everyday life (37.6 percent) and medical care (19.5 percent) than did urban elderly (26 percent for everyday life, and 13.4 percent for medical care).
- More women than men had poor health (52.6 percent women vs. 39.8 percent men) and insufficient income (37.1 percent women vs. 31.3 percent).

## VIII. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FAMILY DISPUTES

### 8.1. Domestic disputes

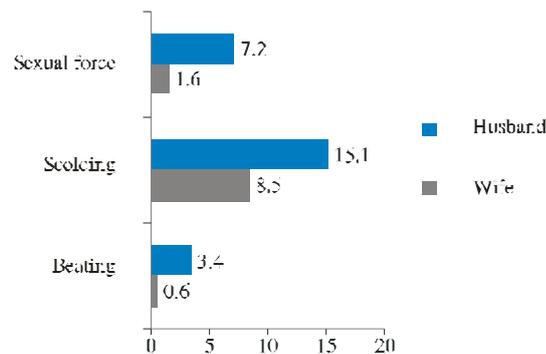
- Data in the survey suggested that, between couples, disputes may arise from many issues including childcare, raising children, managing family business, inter-family relations/affairs and tensions with in-laws.
- Respondents cited management of family accounts, spending, business methods and method of childrearing as common sources of dispute, while ‘lifestyle’ was the most common cause of disagreements among generations.

### 8.2. Domestic violence

- About 21.2 percent of married couples in this survey said that they had experienced one of the following forms of domestic violence: beating, scolding, cursing and accepting to have sex without desire/forced sex. About 10.8 percent of couples reported at least one of these behaviours (husband to wife and vice versa) and about 7.3% percent reported two of these behaviours

- In addition, this survey collected data on another form of violence: "keeping silence and sulking" among couples. The result shows that 26.2 percent of wives kept silent and sulked for several days, compared to 16.7 percent of husbands in the last 12 months. Since "keeping silence and sulking" is not defined as a form of domestic violence by the Law on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence passed by the National Assembly in November 2007, this report will not analyze further this behaviour.

Graph 11: Presence of domestic violence by behaviour (in percent)

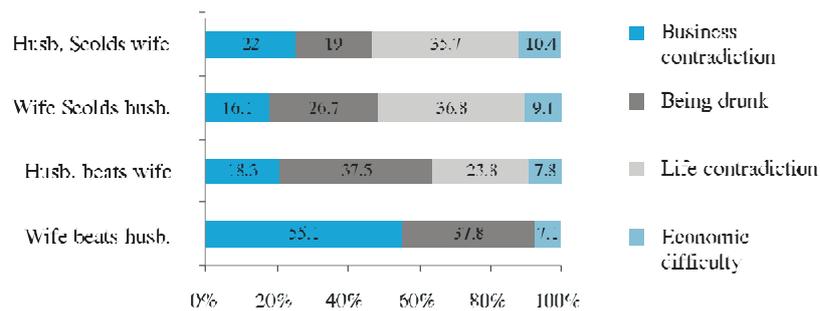


- In general, all forms of domestic violence studied were most common in the four large urban areas studied (Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Hai Phong) For example, for sexual force, there was more sexual force used against women in large urban areas (a 1% difference between large urban and rural areas). A reason is probably that domestic violence is sensitive issue, urban residents have more open minded and are more willing to report.
- Data showed that both wife and husband can be victims of domestic violence, yet it is most often committed by the husband. This includes beating, scolding, cursing and forcing sex on the wife. 7.2 percent of wives reported having sex forced upon them by their husbands, compared to only 1.6 percent of husbands.
- In the survey, 3.4 percent of men beat their wives while 0.6 percent of wives beat their husbands; 15.1 percent of husbands scolded and cursed at their wives while 8.5 percent of wives did this to husbands. Sulking and silence were more common in women.
- When disciplining of children becomes violent, parents are more likely to use scolding/giving a beating with adolescent boys than adolescent girls. 41.8 percent of parents used scolding and 14 percent gave a beating to adolescent boys as a form of discipline. Generally, parental violence against adolescent girls was very low.

### 8.3. Behaviours that lead to disputes and violence in the home

- The Survey found that there were four main behaviours that sparked disputes and violence in the home. These were drunkenness (in men), business disputes, disagreement over everyday issues and money problems.

Graph 12: Chief behaviours leading to domestic violence

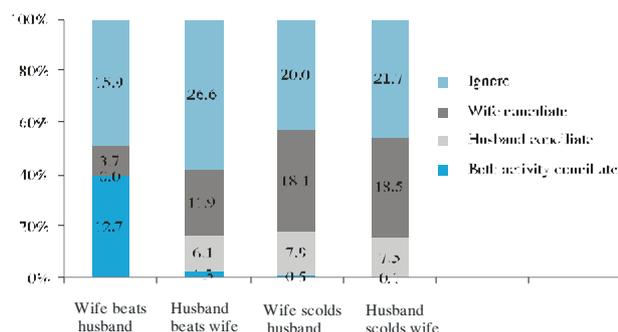


- Respondents also mentioned disputes in childrearing, drug abuse, gambling and suspicion of adultery. In cases where the wife beats the husband, the cause was most likely to be business disputes/problems (55.1 percent) and the husband being drunk (37.8 percent). In cases where the husband beats the wife, the cause was most likely to be the husband being drunk (37.5 percent) and life contradiction (23.8 percent).
- Qualitative data supported the notion that domestic violence against women stems from patriarchal culture, which holds wives in a subordinate position in the family and gives husbands the right to “do anything they want”.

#### 8.4. How respondents dealt with disputes and violence

- Respondents pointed to four common reactions to violence or disputes in the home: “it will be over as the time goes by” (15-27 percent of couples), “both wife and husband concede”, “husband concedes first” or “wife concedes first”.
- Husbands are generally more likely to concede first compared to wives. When husband beats the wife, the husband is most likely to concede first (41.9 percent of these husbands concede first).

Graph 13: Ways in which respondents dealt with violence (in percent)



- Data also confirmed that in cases of violence, couples rarely bring in parents, friends or the authorities out of fear of ‘losing face’, or in the case of the survey, to not “wash their dirty linen in public”.

#### 8.5. Impact of domestic violence

- Women and children were most often victims of serious violent behaviour including beating, scolding and cursing. Women in particular suffer severe stress

when their husbands beat them, scolded them or cursed at them.

- When adolescents witnessed their parents engaged in domestic violence, they reported feelings of sadness and worry (85.4 percent), fear (20 percent), not understanding their parents (8.5 percent), and a loss of respect for their parents (4.2 percent). They also reported the desire to leave the household or run away (5.5 percent).

*“Generally, it is indispensable, for example I often beat the young child (son). I have three daughters who are grown up. When I get too angry with my son, I spank his bottom. I have never beaten my three daughters. I only scold them loudly for neighbors to hear that. As daughters are timid, I just scold them, but son is stubborn.”* (Man, Hai Phong).

*“Most men here drink. Normally they do not talk too much, but when they drink, they pick quarrels and beat their wives. That is quite popular.”* (Man, merchant, Lang Son).

*“Only very tense cases to the authorities. Neighbours also dissuade to prevent big disputes from happening.”* (Man, Dac Lac).

*“In many cases, I have to ask my husband’s good friends to help. For example, when doesn’t listen to me and I am not sure if parents can help...so does it help? I think there is little change.”* (Woman, Hai Phong).

*“I feel saddest when my husband beats me, especially beats on my face as I cannot go out with the wound on my face. I feel very miserable.”* (Woman, merchant, Dac Lac).

## IX. LIVING CONDITIONS

### 9.1. Housing and sources of lighting

- About 55 percent of interviewees responded that they lived in ‘semi-solid’<sup>7</sup> houses, 25 percent in concrete houses and 19 percent in rudimentary or temporary dwellings. Less than 1 percent lived in villas and these were primarily in large cities.
- There was a clear difference in quality of homes based on income: 48.8 percent of well-off families lived in concrete houses and villas while only 12 percent of better-off households and 4 percent of average-income households had them. Nearly 40 percent of poor households lived in rudimentary houses; in one major finding 52 percent of all houses in the Mekong River Delta were temporary structures. This was only 2 percent in the Red River Delta.
- Over 96.4 percent of interviewees answered that the main source of lighting in their homes was the nation-wide grid.
- 3 percent of households did not have electricity.

### 9.2. Water and sanitation

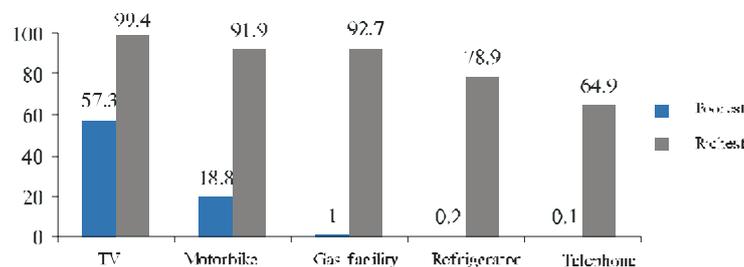
<sup>7</sup> A house is semi-solid when the quality of the construction can last about 20 years i.e. a house with brick or wooden walls, tiled or corrugated iron roof (or other similar materials).

- Over 86.5 percent of households had sources of clean water and 24.6 percent of those had tap water.
- The overall proportion of poor households with tap water was still very low, at only 4.6 percent, yet 62 percent of well-off households had taps.
- Just over 13 percent of households used unhygienic sources of drinking water, including wells, rivers, streams, lakes and ponds. This was highest in the Northwest of the country, at 44.5 percent, followed by the Mekong River Delta, at 26.5 percent.
- Nearly 88 percent of households in the survey had toilets. In general, hygienic toilets (septic tanks and semi-septic tanks) were more common in urban households (76 percent urban vs. 21.7 percent of rural households) and well-off households. Respondents in the northwest regions, Mekong Delta and Central Highlands were least likely to have hygienic toilets.

### 9.3. Home amenities

- Nearly 87 percent of households had TVs, 59.5 percent had motorbikes, 40 percent had gas cookers and 35.5 percent had telephones.
- Just under 1 percent of households had cars, 4 percent had air-conditioners and 8.7 percent had computers. Higher-income households naturally had these more often than low-income households had them.

Graph 14: Durable appliances (in percent)



### 9.4. Living standards

- Over 65 percent of interviewees answered that they had average living standards compared with other households in the local area; about 22 percent of respondents assessed themselves as poor or very poor, 24 percent of them in rural areas and 16 percent in urban areas. This figure agreed with the adjusted poverty line for 2006-2010, which put 22 percent of households nationwide below this level.
- There was a higher incidence of households headed by women classifying themselves as poor or very poor compared to male-headed households (30.4 percent compared to 19.1 percent).
- Well-off households were more often headed by someone with a university degree or higher than were lower-income households.

- About 44 percent of interviewees said that their households had savings in case of emergency or to invest in business or education; 79.8 percent had cash savings, 22.9 percent held it in assets and 26 held savings in other valuable property.
- Urban households had savings more often than rural families (53 percent vs. 40.6 percent) and this was also higher among the more highly educated. The H'mong households with savings was the lowest, at 4.2 percent, while the proportion of Chinese households with savings was at 49.3 percent.
- Over 44.5 percent of interviewees said that their households had experienced misfortune in the 12 months prior to the survey; most of these were in rural areas (49.3 percent in rural areas vs. 31.5 percent in urban area). This was mostly due to crop failure, illness, death, illness in cattle or poultry, accidents, natural disasters, business losses and loss of money and property.
- Nearly 76 percent of households in urban areas had experienced illness or accident and 87.9 percent of households in rural areas experienced crop failure, loss of cattle or loss of poultry.

#### 9.5. Access to basic services

- Over 61 percent of interviewees answered that they were aware of social or economic services and 39 percent of these had used at least one kind of service in the 12 months before the survey. These could be bank loans, agricultural extension services, labour consultancy, employment services and market price information services. Social services most accessed were health care, legal counsel, psychological counselling (psychotherapy) and reproductive health.
- Awareness and use of social services was higher among male heads of household (63.7 percent aware and 40.9 percent used) than among female heads of household (54.6 percent aware and 32.5 percent used)
- The proportion of households in rural and urban areas using economic services was almost the same for bank loans and employment services. The use of the agricultural technology transfer was higher for rural households. The use of services was low in general. Only about 3 percent of households in all areas used employment services; For price information services, use was 11.9 percent for urban households and 7.4 percent for rural households.
- More poor households sought bank loans and agricultural extension services while well-off households tended more to seek market price information services. Use of employment services was low across all groups and there was no significant difference between rich and poor.
- The proportion of households in urban areas using health care services and family planning services was higher than that in rural areas (21.6 percent and 27.3 percent of urban households vs. 14.2 percent and 23.6 percent of rural households). More better-off households sought health services than poor households (20.6 percent vs. 12.4 percent).

## 9.6. Culture and sports

- Data showed that 86 percent of adolescents had read newspapers or books in the 12 months prior to the survey, 41 percent had been to the movies, a concert or a recreational centre, 71 percent had engaged in exercise or sport and 63.6 percent had participated in youth association activities. This was generally higher in urban areas than in rural areas, with the exception of youth association activities. Girls more often than boys tended to take part in the youth association activities and to read (66.1 percent and 87.2 percent respectively) while boys tended more to go to movies/concerts and play sports (44.2 percent and 77.4 percent respectively).
- Nearly 39 percent of adolescents reported that they used the internet; 64.5 percent were in urban areas and 31.8 percent were in rural areas. This was naturally higher among well-off families and slightly higher among boys than among girls (41.3 percent vs. 35.9 percent). Of note was that 63.4 percent of adolescent girls used the internet to chat and 70.7 percent of boys used it to play games, watch movies or listen to music.
- Among adults, 18 percent said they had read books and newspapers in the 12 months prior to the survey, 84.5 percent watched TV, 21.5 had visited their neighbours, 31.8 percent exercised or had participated in sports and 1.9 percent had joined clubs or associations. Less than 1 percent had travelled or gone to concerts, pagodas or festivals.
- There was a significant difference between urban and rural areas in the proportion of adults reading newspapers and books. In urban areas this was 39.9 percent and in rural areas was 9.3 percent. Adults visiting their neighbours in rural areas reached 23.7 percent and in urban areas, 15.9 percent. More women than men said that they read books and newspapers, exercised or participated in sports, or joined clubs.
- Over 42 percent of elderly said they read newspapers, 79.7 percent said they watch TV and 86.3 percent said they engage in sport or exercise everyday.

## 9.7 Demands for specific services, by group

- Welfare-eligible households, including families with martyrs or wounded soldiers, families having great contributions/services for nation account for about 11.4 percent of households. In urban areas this was 8.3 percent and in rural areas was 12.6 percent.
- “Welfare - eligible households” were highest in northern central portion of the country at 16.8 percent, followed by the Red River Delta, at 14.3 percent. Lowest was the northwest region, at 4.8 percent. By income, 13.8 percent of these were ‘better-off’, 13.5 percent were ‘average’ and 8.1 percent were in the ‘better-off or richest” group.
- Over 70.5 percent of ‘welfare - eligible households’ were receiving monthly subsidies, 18.6 percent were receiving package subsidies and 10.9 percent were receiving other subsidies.
- Over 80 percent of households receiving monthly subsidies said that these were

timely and sufficient; 3.5 percent said they were not timely or sufficient or that they do not get any monthly subsidies. Most of these households were lower income or in rural areas.

- Of those households classified as poor by the government, 87 percent received subsidies; 89 percent of urban poor received subsidies and 87.1 percent of rural poor received them as well. Subsidies may be cash, goods, low interest loans, education stipend or funds for health care. Most respondents said that the procedure for getting these subsidies was not overly complicated.
- Nearly 5 percent of households had special conditions, including disabled family members, trafficked women and children who had been returned, drug addicts, people living with HIV/AIDS or victims of dioxin poisoning; 47.2 percent in this group received subsidies from the government. (These generally broke down into two groups: households with disabled family members and households with victims of dioxin poisoning)

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

After 20 years of *Doi Moi*, the Vietnamese family has changed in function, structure, relationships, lifestyle, economics and cultural life. Though this has not always been easy, in general families are feeling the benefit of modernisation. This reinforces the social value of the family. Following are some of the major changes found by the survey.

### **Income and living standards**

Families are growing smaller and there are fewer generations under one roof. Labour is shifting from agricultural to industrial, construction and services and this has wide implications for income and living standards. As family business decreases, the individual wage earner has emerged. The tendency of individualizing family income sources reduces the role of family as an economic unit in the area of production.

Policymakers should therefore influence family consumption to stabilise the economic status and living standards of the family e.g. focusing on controlling prices of basic necessities to protect poor households or individuals at risk, supporting income – generating activities, especially for the unemployed. They should also consider assistance programmes ensuring support for the basic necessities in households prone to risk/vulnerability like those with elderly in the home, single-parent families with young children and poor households.

These policies should take into account the special characteristics of region, area, ethnic group and head of household (female or male). They should also focus on two main groups: poor families in remote, rural areas, and the poor among ethnic minorities need regular support to maintain or even reach the minimum living standard. Often these groups cannot access resources and economic opportunities.

Families also need support when they are at risk of crop failure, illness or accident. This could be in the community, in the form of family health care, plant and livestock insurance or/and other forms of family or individual insurance. These measures would help poor/vulnerable families overcome risks and shocks or at least reduce their vulnerability to these as a result of lack of savings.

### **Family welfare**

Family welfare varies by region, living standard and ethnicity. This is the most obvious in housing, water supply, access to basic services and cultural/sport activities. Recent economic growth has created more opportunities for families, yet their ability to seize them depends heavily on their conditions, capacities and opportunities. This difference too has increased with economic development.

Therefore, policies to improve family welfare should be focused and prioritized to target the most at risk/vulnerable families in different regions, areas and ethnic groups. For example, living conditions, including housing, electricity and source of water, are below standard in the Mekong Delta while households in North West, especially ethnic H'mong and Dao minority households in mountainous northern areas, need electricity and safe water.

Administrative reform, decentralisation, diversification of services such as loans, technology transfer, employment services, health care and social counselling etc. would also provide families with much-needed support. These policies should also encourage economic actors to participate more in providing services while state agencies focus on improving conditions for poor households nationwide and especially targeted ethnic minority areas. This should take into account the special needs of different age groups e.g. adolescents and elderly to allow all to access services equally and to ensure that services meet the needs of these specific groups.

Policymakers should also ensure that specific efforts are made for the disabled, victims of dioxin poisoning, People Living with HIV/AIDS and the elderly.

### **Family values**

Vietnamese family values and norms are changing as the country integrates into the world economy. Marriage is still highly valued and seen as the foundation for building a family. Although new family types are emerging, including single-parent households and households headed by women, marriage is still central. Single life, however, is still not common.

The individual has also gained new importance and women are claiming their right to self-determination. Where divorce was once shunned in Vietnamese society, women now seek it in greater numbers as a way to take greater control of their own lives, and more women than men initiate the proceedings as awareness of their rights improves.

In most cases children live with the mother after divorce, yet also in many cases fathers do not pay adequate child support. This puts a heavy burden on single mothers and children. Policymakers should address this directly with programmes for this new type of family.

Children are still paramount and still equal “fortune” in traditional thinking, yet most people do not want to have many children according to the survey. They instead favour “one or two” children and would rather focus on raising that child the best they can.

Though still prevalent, traditional “son preference” is changing gradually. Sons have traditionally been favoured to maintain the family line, and this is still a common reason. Many also said that they preferred a son “to have someone to rely on when they get old and to have someone to do heavy and important work”. Yet a notable

percentage of respondents also expressed no preference. One implication of this is that the government's advocacy on family planning still needs to focus on changing the "son preference" felt by many people in Viet Nam.

### Family norms

Most newlyweds register their marriage per current law. This is not only a measure of respect for civil duty but also for the rights of both sides in case of dispute. This occurs because more people are newly aware of their rights and responsibilities. Yet about 20 percent of people still do not register marriage, particularly among lower-income groups, ethnic minorities and those of lower education. For a certain proportion of people, social acceptance of marriage is more important than legal recognition.

Criteria for choosing a partner have also changed. The traditional concept of "suitable alliance" still has influence on marriage but the difference now is that an individual's "suitable alliance" in economic status, position and social group is more important than the family's "suitable alliance". This followed the logic that those living in a similar situation are more compatible. Where traditional concepts like 'good behaviour', 'good conduct', 'good health' 'good at business' and 'from my village/district/commune' are still present, they have been augmented by new criteria focused mainly on income and education. The traditional values hold more among lower-income groups and newer criteria hold more among urban higher wage earners. Most respondents chose good behaviour, good conduct, good health and good at business.

Age at marriage is another important indicator in assessing the shift away from traditional norms. People are marrying later and the traditional "13 for girls and 16 for boys" appears to have fallen by the wayside. Rather, young people want stable jobs even if it means putting off marriage

Still, some respondents had married before the legal age (20 for men and 18 for women). This is more common in rural and mountainous areas and would be an opportunity for policymakers to increase awareness among young people there of education before marriage.

Right to decide marriage, once in the hands of parents alone, has changed as well and more and more individuals are making this decision on their own. It is more common among the more highly educated and those in urban areas. Instead, prospective couples now consult their parents, satisfying the need for family participation at some level.

Property division among offspring, meanwhile, still favours the son in most cases. Although attitudes are changing slowly, and although property passes to women in more cases, Viet Nam is still a patriarchal society and women are still at a disadvantage. This is more true in rural areas among lower-income respondents and among lower education groups.

## Family relationships

Head of family still defaults to the man in Viet Nam and property title defaults to men as well. Yet this is changing and respondents said that if women are capable, they should be heads of the family. Gender is less and less the only criterion and young people look also at income and ability to make a decision. This is more common in urban families.

Men still generally make decisions on "big" affairs and many women still consider this as a "natural rule". Women more often decide smaller, everyday work related to small amounts of money. Husbands mainly decide on business, buying-selling property or large items, building or repairing a house, buying expensive furniture and getting loans. Women's tasks include organizing weddings, funerals, death anniversaries and parties.

These findings support the notion that gender discrimination is still common in Viet Nam and there should be stronger implementation of the Law on Gender Equality.

Gender-based allocation of labour is still common in the family, although there is more equal division of business tasks and other work. Women still were regarded as more suitable to housework, childcare, bookkeeping, and care of the elderly and sick. Men were regarded, meanwhile, as more suitable to production and business, receiving guests and dealing with the authorities.

That men do heavy work, women do light work is perceived as a "natural" labour allocation in the family. This continuity of gender-based labour allocations in family

Gender-based labour allocation also depends on economic status and traditional norms and policymakers should ultimately be concerned with gender equality.

Loyalty is still a standard in spousal relationships and most respondents frowned on extra-marital sex even when one spouse is away for long periods of time. Nor did many respondents approve of premarital sex or live-in relationships before marriage. Yet many urban or highly-educated respondents showed more acceptance. Respondents cited "poor attention from family" and "lack of reproductive health education" as causes of pre-marital sex and policymakers should address both of these concerns.

On marriage, most respondents reported that they were satisfied with their spouse. This was higher among respondents with higher living standards and higher education. Yet this was largely ignoring disputes and conflicts in family life. "Differences over behaviour" and financial difficulty were the two main reasons leading to dissatisfaction among married couples and these tied into domestic violence. Surveys found that 21.2 percent of married couples had instances of beating, insulting, verbal humiliation, using vulgar words, sulking and forced sex in the 12

months prior to the survey. (Note that domestic violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men, against women.)

Domestic violence was more common in lower-educated, lower-income respondents and tended to have serious consequences for women and children. Yet lingering traditional concepts of “saving face” in the family ensure that these abuses stay behind closed doors without adequate intervention by police or social services. Policy needs to focus on stronger implementation of the Law on Protection and Control of Domestic Violence.

After marriage, most newlyweds traditionally go to live with the husband’s parents, yet this is changing and couples may live with either side now or even live on their own. Where it does still occur, living with the parents meets the interests of both parents and young couples. Parents can help newly married couples become self-sufficient and become economically established sooner .

Concerning care of elderly family members, it is still common for them to live with the eldest or youngest married son, although this is changing to suit modern lifestyles. Where it does occur it is mainly for support. About 50 percent of elderly in Viet Nam are in poor health and must have a means of financial support. Yet elderly contribute to the household as well, taking care of young children, for example, which gives them a sense of usefulness.

However, younger generations cannot always support their parents and policymakers need to put forward more programmes for the elderly including insurance and social assistance. Elderly are also in need of cultural and recreational programmes to maintain a happy life.

Although the traditional norm of respect for elders is still present in Viet Nam, families are becoming more democratic. While most respondents said that young people must “obey elderly's instructions” and “children must get parents' permission to get married”, the reality suggests a relaxing of these notions. Slowly youth are feeling a new degree of independence and many parents grant children more freedoms in this respect by letting them express their opinions on family decisions in business, home construction/care, buying expensive furniture, allocating property, land purchase/use and use of money. Many young respondents considered their parents like "big friends" with whom they can talk about their problems.

It was noteworthy in the survey that because of the burden of earning living, many parents do not spend as much time taking care of children as they want to, especially in poor families, families in rural areas and ethnic minority families. And many parents still handle children in less-positive ways, ignoring destructive behaviour or using corporal punishment. This has very negative consequences for child development, and can lead to young people picking quarrels, drinking or using drugs. Policy should therefore work to help parents spend more time with children and improve family communication.

The survey found that many children still perform household labour as a matter of course, especially in rural areas, and girls bear more of the burden particularly in housework. Youth participate most often in cleaning house, washing up and cooking. Youth also work in family business, especially in poor households or in rural areas. About a quarter of adolescents, meanwhile, have taken part in paid labour, many at a young age doing simple but arduous tasks. This violates children's rights. Economic development can end this but in the meantime policymakers must increase labour safety and remove opportunities to exploit child labour.

In conclusion, this Survey on the Family has made an important contribution to knowledge on the real situation of families in Viet Nam. This knowledge can and will be used by policy makers to address the emerging challenges facing families, through the development of new and revised policy actions. The survey also provides a strong baseline set of data for the government to monitor trends and evolutions in the future for the family in Viet Nam. As the country continues to grow, change and make tremendous socio-economic progress, the impact of this progress on its people, on its families and young people, will need to be tracked and monitored, ideally every five or ten years. The present Family Survey represents a significant and visionary tool in the ongoing effort to better understand the evolution of the family in Viet Nam.