



SURVEY ON THE FAMILY IN VIET NAM FACT SHEET

INTRODUCTION

The Survey on the Family in Viet Nam in 2006 is the first nation-wide study on family issues conducted. It is the result of collaboration between the former Vietnam Committee for Population, Family and Children (VCPFC), the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MOCST), the Institute for Family and Gender Studies, the General Statistics Office (GSO), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with technical support from the Australia Institute of Family Research and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) of the Australian Government. The general objective of the study was to identify the real situation of the family during industrialization, modernization and globalization in Viet Nam.

The survey applied quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from 9,300 randomly selected households, including ethnic minority families, in all 64 provinces of the country. To obtain as much information as possible on the family, the researchers surveyed not only the heads of households, but also the elderly and adolescents.

THE HOUSEHOLD TODAY

Nuclear families are more common in urban areas and among the growing affluent. Over half of households (63.4 %) are 'two-generation', and where 'three-generation' households still exist, this is mostly in the city. Average number of dependents per household is 0.5.

Income-generating activities have changed significantly in households, shifting away from agriculture, forestry and aquaculture and toward construction and the service industries. Respondents from poor households work primarily in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture while respondents from well-off households tend to work in construction and services.

MARRIAGE

Marriage remains popular in Vietnam. It is changing, however. Age at first marriage was higher in the cities



(by about 3 years for both men and women) and among highly-skilled professionals (by about 4.5 years for both men and women, compared with simple labour).

Over 80 % of respondents aged 18 to 60 are aware of the need to register marriage. The remaining 20 % are chiefly ethnic minority groups, respondents in rural areas, low-income or of lower educational achievement.

Most respondents were married with children, but divorce is rising. The divorce rate found by the survey was 2.6% of respondents aged group 18-60, with higher rate in urban areas (3.3% compared to 2.4% in rural areas) and is initiated twice as often by women compared with men. Most children live with the mother after a divorce. Among the divorced, 27.7 % cite "disputes in lifestyle" as the reason for the divorce, and 25.9 % cite adultery.



CHOOSING A PARTNER

Asked why they marry, 31.5 % respondents aged 18 - 60 answered, "Because I am old enough", signalling that this is a mature choice made by the individual rather than the traditional will of the parents. Where this did remain, it was highest in the Mekong Delta and lowest in the northeast of the country.

Three traditional criteria prevail in partner selection: good behaviour, good health, and good business skills; while new ones, such as stable income and



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good qualifications like education, have emerged, most commonly among urban higher-wage earners.

SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

Although changing family models accord women more self-determination, many are still relegated to housework and childcare. Where more than 80% of men surveyed held title to farm, housing/forest land, this figure was about 10% for women. Ownership of business property is 62.4% vs. 31.4 % male to female in rural areas, whereas the figures are 40.0% to 53.0 % male to female in urban areas.

Just over 90% of respondents reported that they were satisfied with their marriages. This increases as wealth/income and education increase, yet also decreases over years married. In the poorest quintile, 21% reported being very satisfied with their marriages, compared with 36.5% in the richest quintile. The two main reasons respondents noted for dissatisfaction in marriage were "behavioural differences" (45.3%) and "economic hardship" (43.4%).

Most respondents disapproved of extra-marital sex, particularly the elderly and adolescents (less than 2 % approved).



RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Most respondents said that raising children is an important function in family. Opinions on number of

children have changed dramatically. Only 18.6 % of elderly, 6.6 % of adults and 2.8% 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. Although son preference still exists, over 63 % of respondents aged 18 to 60 rejected the practice.

Parents are particularly concerned about education, although this is less pronounced in rural and ethnic minority homes. More highly-educated, higher-income parents tend to be concerned with education of their children.

The survey also found that women spend six times as much time as men caring for children under 15. Parents cited work as a common time constraint in childrearing and pointed to arguing, fighting, truancy, drinking, gambling, drug abuse, smoking, and staying out all night as common worries about their children.

Parents reported dealing with problem behaviours in youth in several different ways, including warnings and analysing right and wrong (74.2 %), scolding (42.6 %), giving a beating (11.2 %), contacting the school (51. %), ignoring the issue (8.8 %), feeling upset or powerless (0.5 %).

ADOLESCENTS IN THE FAMILY

The survey revealed that it was very common for children to take part in family work, especially in rural areas. Youth aged 15 to 17 participating in paid labour was twice as high among minorities as among the Kinh majority and it was especially high in the northwest of the country, at 52.2 %, and lowest in the northeast (14.3 %) and Red River Delta (15.1 %). Of youth who responded that they took part in paid work, average age when this began was 14.3 years.

On life concerns, adolescents cited lack of money for expenses (21.7 %), poor learning ability (10.7 %) and lack of opportunity for higher education (10.5 %) as their greatest difficulties.

In an encouraging finding, 58 % of respondents aged 15-17 were aware of the 2004 Law on Protection, Care



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and Education of Children. This was highest in the northeast of the country (79.7 %), followed by the Red River Delta (67.1 %), and was lowest in the northwest (48.8 %).

ELDERLY IN THE FAMILY

Over 32.6 % of households surveyed had elderly family members, more commonly in urban areas. The distribution was highest in the northern central area and lowest in Central Highlands. It was more common among lower-income households. Half of elderly respondents prefer living with their family members. Over 90 % of respondents said that the elderly also support their adult children with either money, experience, childcare or housework. Just over 39 % of elderly said that their main means of support was their children, 30 % from their own work and 25.9 % from a pension or subsidy.

64 % of elderly said that they had difficulties in life: 46 % had poor health, 34 % lacked money for everyday needs, 17.8 % lacked money for medical care and 1.8 % were not cared for by their families or were not shown respect.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FAMILY DISPUTES

In the survey, 21.2% of married couples said that they had experienced one of the following forms of domestic violence which are included in the 2007 Law on Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence: beating, scolding, cursing, and accepting to have sex without desire/forced sex. In addition, 26.2% of wives “kept silent and sulked” for several days, compared to 16.7% of husbands in the last 12 months. 3.4 % of men beat their wives while 0.6 % of wives beat their husbands; 15.1 % of husbands scolded and cursed at their wives while 8.5 % of wives did this to husbands.

Drunkenness (in men), poor business decisions, disagreement over everyday issues, money problems, adultery, and gambling fuel disputes, according to respondents.

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