GENERAL STATISTICS OFFICE

THE POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS 2019

THE CURRENT STATUS AND DETERMINANTS OF FERTILITY IN VIET NAM

Ha Noi, June 2021

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FOREWORD

The 2019 Population and Housing Census was conducted at 0:00 on April 1, 2019 according to the Prime Minister's Decision No. 772/QD-TTg dated June 26, 2018. This is the fifth Population and Housing Census in Viet Nam since its reunification in 1975. The 2019 Population and Housing Census collects basic information on population and housing in the entire territory of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the formulation of national socio-economic development policies and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the Government of Viet Nam has committed to implement.

Following the results of the Population and Housing Census released on 19 December 2019, the General Statistics Office (GSO) conducted an in-depth analysis of fertility in Viet Nam. This is one of the topics that is attracting the attention of researchers, managers, policymakers and society since it provides important information on fertility status and proposes appropriate policy recommendations in response to demographic and social changes for sustainable development.

The development of the monograph **"The current status and determinants of fertility in Viet Nam"** uses the previous and 2019 Population and Housing Censuses data. It provides a more in-depth analysis of the current status and changes in Viet Nam's fertility over the past 30 years, and differences in fertility among regions and population groups.

The results of the analysis presented in the monograph affirm a stable national fertility over the past decade. Still, the differences exist among regions, localities and population groups. In addition, the report also provided information on fertility of adolescents aged 10-19 which are more at risk of health problems due to early pregnancy and childbirth. Based on the research results, the monograph proposes policy recommendations related to fertility and other issues in Viet Nam to be addressed.

The monograph **"The current status and determinants of fertility in Viet Nam"** is developed by the GSO in collaboration with national experts under the technical support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The GSO would like to thank UNFPA for its cooperation and support in the implementation of the 2019 Population and Housing Census in general and in compilation of this publication in particular. We would like to express our sincere thanks to the experts, UNFPA in Viet Nam, and UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office (APRO) for their valuable contributions to the compilation and completion of this publication.

The GSO would like to introduce the publication "**The current status and determinants of fertility in Viet Nam"** to readers and data users.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASFR   Age Specific Fertility Rate

ASFR10   Age Specific Fertility Rate of women aged 10-19

CBR   Crude Birth Rate

CEB   Children Ever Born

Census   Population and Housing Census

INMR   In-migration rate

NRR   Net Reproduction Rate

OMR   Out-migration rate

SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals

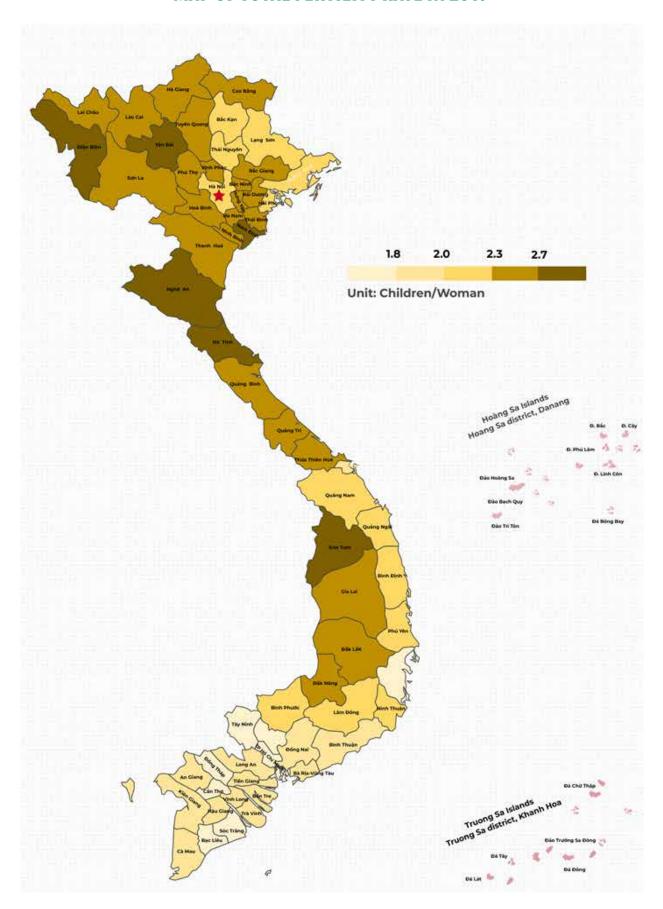SRB   Sex Ratio at Birth

TFR   Total Fertility Rate

UN   United Nations

VSDGs   Viet Nam Sustainable Development Goals

WHO   World Health Organization

MAP OF TOTAL FERTILITY RATE IN 2019

| 1.8 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 2.7 |

Unit: Children/Woman

SUMMARY

Fertility is one of the most important factors affecting population size and structure. Fertility influences and reflects a country's socio-economic development. For this reason, fertility-related indicators always attract the attention of policy makers, managers and researchers.

To provide comprehensive information and new evidence on changes in fertility, among regions, geographic areas, and population groups, and determinants of fertility in Viet Nam, the monograph has been built on the basis of data analysis of the Population and Housing Census (hereafter referred to as the Census) conducted in 2019 and in previous years, including 1989, 1999, and 2009. The results show that:

- In the past 30 years, Viet Nam's total fertility rate (TFR) nearly halved (from 3.80 children per woman in 1989 to 2.09 children per woman in 2019), a key contributor to the drop in population growth rate in recent years. This affirms that Viet Nam has successfully implemented the family planning program and achieved the goal of fertility reduction. Viet Nam's fertility decline occurs simultaneously to an increase in the age at childbearing. The age specific fertility rate was highest in the group aged 20-24 years old previously, but it is now highest in the group aged 25-29 years old. Currently, fertility at national level has been remaining close to replacement level over the last decade, but there still exist TFR differences among regions, localities and population groups.

- Currently, TFR in rural areas is higher than replacement-level fertility and higher than that found in urban areas (2.26 children per woman versus 1.83 children per woman, respectively). From 1989 to 2009, fertility in both urban and rural areas decreased. However, the TFR has slightly increased during 2009-2019, both in rural and urban areas.

- The Northern Midlands and Mountainous Areas and the Central Highlands are the regions with the highest total fertility rate (2.43 children per woman), of which the Central Highlands show the highest fertility decline within the past two decades. The South East and the Mekong River Delta are the two regions with the lowest TFR in the country, and lower than replacement-level fertility (1.56 and 1.80 children per woman, respectively).

- The results of the 2019 Census show that the TFR was highest in Ha Tinh province (2.83 children per woman), twice as high as Ho Chi Minh City, which has the lowest TFR (1.39 children per woman). In the past 10 years, TFR have declined in 29 provinces and increased in 33 provinces.

- Among ethnic groups with a population size of over 1 million people, the Mong records the highest TFR, although also the largest fertility decline in the past 30 years (from 9.30 children per woman in 1989 to 4.96 children per woman in 2009 and 3.59 children per woman in 2019). Furthermore, some ethnic groups with a population size of 1 million people or more have witnessed a decline in fertility in the past 30 years, such as: the Kinh, Tay, Thai, Khmer, and Muong. Currently, the fertility gap among ethnic groups is narrowing.

- The results of the 2019 Census indicate that women of different characteristics have different fertility rates:

    (i) Childbearing is rare outside marriage. Never-married women possess a low TFR (0.07 children per woman in 2019). This rate decreases in the past 10 years, specifically in areas with many ethnic minorities, such as the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Areas, and the North Central and Central Coastal Areas.

    (ii) The age specific fertility rate of women aged 10-19 (ASFR10) was 11 births per 1,000 women in 2019;

    (iii) Female migrants have a lower TFR than non-migrants (1.54 children per woman versus 2.13 children per woman, respectively);

    (iv) Women with high education have a lower fertility than women with no or lower education;

    (v) Women living in the poorest households have a TFR higher than replacement-level and record the highest TFR among the five income quintiles (2.40 children per woman). Women living in the richest households have the lowest total fertility rate (2.00 children per woman).

Moreover, results calculated from the 2019 Census data show that in the context of sex imbalance at birth, replacement-level fertility (reached when each generation of mothers is having exactly enough daughters to replace themselves) is obtained in Viet Nam with a TFR of 2.16 children per woman at national level, higher than replacement-level fertility of 2.1 children per woman in countries without sex imbalance at birth (with SRB of 105 -106 male births per 100 female births). At provincial level, 26 provinces have lower fertility than replacement-level fertility while 35 provinces have higher fertility than replacement-level fertility.

Below are some recommendations proposed in relation to analysis results, including:

(1) Continue to advance socio-economic development policies that promote gender equality in localities across the country to ensure women's access to opportunities and equality with men in education, training, sexual and reproductive health care, employment and income and that will enhance the role and position of women in the family and society. This is also a direct solution to address and reduce the sex imbalance at birth in Viet Nam.

(2) Strengthen the implementation of policies on education and sexual and reproductive health care for ethnic minorities in general and ethnic girls in particular to create motivation, and

(4) Further invest in girls and women of reproductive age by building their knowledge and skills relating to sexual and reproductive health care; and promoting policies to ensure their increased access to education, sexual and reproductive health, and better equality in employment and income, as well as to introduce flexibility in reproductive choice in accordance with the principles of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

(5) Further improve the quality of statistical information on population in general and on fertility in particular to serve evidence-based policy development. Information on fertility and other related information should be collected and aggregated with consistent, transparent, objective methods and statistical data should be widely shared for policy formulation and debate. Particularly, attention should be paid to coordination among government agencies in connecting survey data sources with administrative data to ensure fast, efficient and resource-saving compilation of statistical indicators. In addition, in-depth studies on the phenomenon of low fertility in some localities should be conducted to provide timely information for the development of appropriate policies.