



ETHNIC GROUPS IN VIET NAM:

An analysis of key indicators
from the 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census



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ABBREVIATION

IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
SMAM	Singulate Mean Age at Marriage
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

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INTRODUCTION

Viet Nam is known as a country in which many ethnic groups are living together. The Kinh ethnic group accounts for the largest proportion with approximately 86 per cent but additionally, another 53 ethnic groups as well as a substantial number of Vietnamese of foreign origin are living in Viet Nam. The Constitution of Viet Nam recognizes equity amongst all ethnic groups as a priority and as reflected in the documents issued by the 9th National Congress, the cause of ethnic groups and ethnic solidarity hold a long term strategic position in the revolutionary cause of the country. The Party and State have made substantial efforts to develop and enforce national policies which support cultural and ethnic diversity, with the aim of ensuring equal development, strengthening solidarity, promoting mutual support among ethnic groups, improving material and spiritual lives, reducing poverty, broadening people's knowledge, and reducing socio-economic disparity between all 54 ethnic groups in Viet Nam.

The robust data from the 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census enables analysis and studies regarding demographic as well as socio-economic patterns observed within different ethnic groups. The majority of the above mentioned indicators are generated from results derived from the sample survey of 15 per cent of the total population. The statistics of the 2009 census show that the size of the different ethnic groups varies widely. Among the ethnic groups, six consist of more than 1 million people; 14 ethnic groups have populations ranging from 100,000 to 1,000,000 people. All remaining ethnic groups have populations of less than 100,000 people, and several groups only comprise a few hundred people.

Although the sample size of the survey is taken from 15 per cent of the total population recorded in the 2009 census, the following analysis (with specific indicators) will focus on a selection of ethnic groups with the aim to ensure statistical reliability and representation. Indicators on age and sex structure will be analyzed for the 10 ethnic groups with the largest populations (from

400,000 people and over) including the Kinh (73,594,427 people), Tay (1,626,392 people), Thai (1,550,423 people), Muong (1,268,963 people), Khmer (1,260,640 people), Hoa (823,071 people), Nung (968,800 people), Mong (1,068,189 people), Dao (751,067 people) and Gia Rai (411,275 people). Other indicators will be analyzed for 6 ethnic groups that consist of one million or more people namely the Kinh, Tay, Thai, Muong, Khmer and Mong. Indicators related to education and technical training are analyzed for the ethnic group of Kinh and for the category “others”.

This booklet is the tenth in a series published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in recent years. Its contents analyse various indicators including age profiles, sex and marriage patterns; total fertility and mortality rates; levels of educational attainment and technical training, each by ethnicity withdrawing from publications generated from the 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census, including the Completed Results, Major Findings¹ and a series of the 2009 census monographs. Other indicators have been aggregated and calculated from the original data.

UNFPA would like to thank the national consultant, Mr. Nguyen Van Phai and other staff at UNFPA for their invaluable contribution to the development and finalization of this booklet.

In publishing this booklet, it is hoped ready access will be provided to basic information on various ethnic groups in Viet Nam with the aim to facilitate the design of evidence-based policy and program development in order to reduce socio-economic disparity and vulnerability while maintaining the rich cultural diversity of the ethnic minorities in Viet Nam and improving their quality of life.

¹ Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee (2010), 'The 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census: Completed Results'

Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee (2010), 'The 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census: Major Findings'



1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

AGE AND SEX PATTERNS

The 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census collected a variety of information sufficient enough to determine the population size and structure of 54 ethnic groups in Viet Nam. However, in order to have a relatively detailed study about the age and sex structure of various ethnic groups in Viet Nam, the present paper refers to the 10 largest ethnic groups with population size ranging from 400,000 people and higher. These 10 ethnic groups include Kinh, Tay, Thai, Muong, Khmer, Hoa, Nung, Mong, Dao and Gia Rai (Table 1).

Table 1. Population size of 10 ethnic groups by sex

Ethnic group	Total population (person)	Male (person)	Female (person)	Weight in the total population (%)
Entire country	85,846,997	42,413,143	43,433,854	100
Kinh	73,594,427	36,304,095	37,290,332	85.73
Tay	1,626,392	808,079	818,313	1.89
Thai	1,550,423	772,605	777,818	1.81
Muong	1,268,963	630,983	637,980	1.48
Khmer	1,260,640	617,650	642,990	1.47
Hoa	823,071	421,883	401,188	0.96
Nung	968,800	485,579	483,221	1.13
Mong	1,068,189	537,423	530,766	1.24
Dao	751,067	377,185	373,882	0.87
Gia Rai	411,275	201,905	209,370	0.48

Source: Table 5, page 134, *The 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census: Completed Results*

Observations of the statistics for the 10 above mentioned ethnic groups (Annex 1) found that the age pyramids of the first group which includes the three ethnic groups Mong, Dao and Gia Rai, are characterized by large bases and rapidly narrowing tops. It also becomes clear that the fertility and mortality rates among these ethnic groups are relatively high while fertility decline is happening slowly.

The second group comprises three ethnic groups i.e. Nung, Khmer and Hoa. The continuously narrowing base together with a relatively large body and slowly narrowing top of the age pyramid for this group show that the total fertility rate (TFR) has declined continuously over the last 15 years and that the total mortality rate (TMR) is relatively low. Out of these 3 ethnic groups, the age

pyramid for the Hoa is unique. Although the base of their pyramid is shrinking continuously, the rate of shrinking is smaller than that of the Nung and Khmer ethnic groups. More specifically, the population in the age groups 20-24 and 25-29 is smaller than that of the 30-34 age group, a fact possibly caused by international migration. Out of the 10 most populous ethnic groups included in the analysis, only the Hoa ethnic group witnessed a decrease in population when comparing the year 2009 with 1999.

The final group consists of the three ethnic groups Tay, Thai and Muong. The age patterns for these three ethnic groups are very similar, therefore their age pyramids look similar. Their TFR during the periods 1994-1999 and 1999-2004 decreased rapidly. However, due to the increase in the number of births during the 5 years prior to the census, the population in the 0-4 age group is larger than that of the 5-9 group. As the fertility rate in this ethnic group is not high, the body of the pyramid is larger compared to group 1. The Kinh ethnic group accounts for the largest percentage comprising 86 per cent of the national population and thus its age and sex structures are similar to that of the national population.

Table 2. Population proportion by age groups, dependency ratio, aging index and male:female sex ratio of 10 key selected ethnic groups in 2009

Ethnic group	Population proportion			Aging index	Dependency ratio			Sex ratio
	0-14	15-59	60+		Young	Old	Total	
Entire country	24.5	66.9	8.9	35.5	35.4	9.3	44.7	97.6
Kinh	23.4	67.6	9.0	38.5	33.5	9.6	43.1	94.7
Tay	24.2	67.9	7.9	32.5	34.6	8.3	42.9	98.7
Thai	29.0	64.6	6.4	22.0	43.8	7.2	51.0	99.3
Muong	24.9	67.9	7.2	28.9	35.7	7.6	43.3	98.9
Khmer	25.6	67.4	7.0	27.3	37.0	7.3	44.3	96.1
Hoa	22.3	67.6	10	44.9	31.7	10.3	42.1	105.2
Nung	27.8	64.8	7.4	26.5	41.6	7.9	49.5	100.5
Mong	45.8	50.0	4.2	9.1	89.4	5.6	95.0	101.3
Dao	33.5	60.8	5.6	16.7	53.7	6.4	60.0	100.9
Gia Rai	39.9	54.1	6.0	15.0	71.4	7.8	79.2	96.4

The data in Table 2 shows that, among 10 ethnic groups with the largest population in the study, the Mong and Gia Rai ethnic groups have a “young population”, i.e. the population under 15 years old accounts for 35 per cent or higher. The proportion of population under 15 years old in Mong and Gia Rai is 45.8 per cent and 39.9 per cent, respectively. Other ethnic groups are at different stages of the “aging” process. However, none of them are yet experiencing an “aged” population. Ethnic groups with a small ratio of population in the age group of 0-14 (lower than the average national level) and high ratio of population in the age group over 60 (higher than that of the average national level) are the Hoa (with 22.3 per cent) and Kinh (23.4 per cent). Correspondingly, only the Hoa and Kinh have an aging index higher than the national level. At the time of the 2009 census there were 4.5 people aged 60 and over for every 10 children (under 15 years old) in the Hoa ethnic group while for the Mong there was one person aged 60 and over for every 11 children. In 6 of the 10 ethnic groups with the largest population sizes, the Total Dependency Ratio is less than 50 percent, meaning that these six ethnic groups are entering a phase of “demographic bonus”. The dependency ratio of the Hoa, Tay, Kinh and Muong are lowest with about 42-43 per cent. In these ethnic groups, there are 2.5 people of working age (15-64 years old with full working capacity) for every 1 person of non-working age. At the time of the census, the Thai ethnic group did not appear to be in a stage of “demographic bonus”. However, the dependency ratio for this group is currently 51 percent and they will thus enter such a “demographic bonus” period within the next one or two years. The dependency ratio for the Mong, Dao and Gia Rai ethnic groups range from 60 to 95 per cent.

Data in Table 2 also indicate that four out of 10 ethnic groups in the study have male:female sex ratios higher than 100, i.e. the Hoa (105.2), Mong (101.3), Dao (100.9) and Nung (100.5). The high sex ratio experienced by the Mong, Dao and Nung ethnic groups might be attributed to poor living conditions and poor/limited access to good quality maternal health services resulting in high mortality rates among females. The male:female sex ratio of children under 1 year of age and among the 1-4 age group in the Mong, Dao and Nung ethnic groups

are at the standard biological ratio i.e. for the Nung (107 versus 105.5), the Mong (101.6 versus 102.4) and the Dao (104.3 versus 105.3). These figures indicate that sex selection does not happen in these three ethnic groups. Meanwhile, the high sex ratio among the Hoa may be attributed to two causes i.e. sex selection (resulting in a high sex ratio of 110.6 among children under 5 years old) and international migration among young and middle aged females (resulting in a remarkably high sex ratio in these age groups). The sex ratio in the age groups of 30-34 and 35-40 is very high for the Hoa ethnic group with 120.3 males per 100 females.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Results generated from the last three censuses in Viet Nam show that the average household size has decreased substantially from 4.82 people in 1989 to 4.51 in 1999 and 3.78 in 2009. The tradition of inter-generational cohabitating in extended families as well as marriage and fertility patterns, have a direct impact on household size. The household size tends to decrease when improvements in overall economic development occur. This relationship can be seen clearly by analyzing the household size of 6 ethnic groups with a population of 1 million and over (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Average household size by ethnic group, 2009

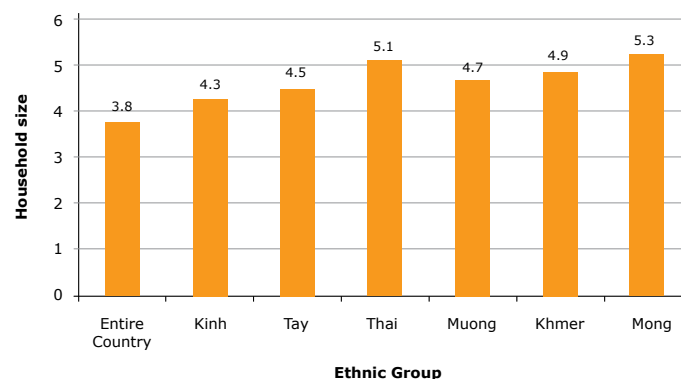


Figure 1 shows that the ethnic groups with a higher level of socio-economic development have a lower fertility rate (referring to Total Fertility Rate Section). For example, the Kinh and Tay ethnic groups have small household sizes while the Mong and Thai people have high fertility rates, extended families and large household sizes.

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION BY REGIONS

Ethnic distribution by socio- economic regions

The data in Table 3 indicates that the Kinh people account for the biggest proportion of the population in five (out of six) socio- economic regions: 84.7 per cent in the Central Highlands and 98.5 per cent in the Red River Delta. In the Northern Midland and Mountain regions, the Kinh people account for only 45.3 per cent.

The majority of Tay, Thai, Muong and Mong people are living in the Northern Midland and Mountain areas, while most Khmer people are living in the Mekong River Delta.

Ethnic distribution by provinces and cities

The Kinh people account for the majority of the population in 53 cities/provinces out of 63 nation-wide. Minorities of Kinh people live in 14 provinces located in the Northern Midland and Mountain areas. However, three provinces out of these 14 i.e. Thai Nguyen, Bac Giang and Phu Tho provinces, have a greater proportion of Kinh people. Other ethnic groups are distributed throughout the following areas:

- Most people of the Tay ethnic group live in the northern mountainous provinces of Red river. The distribution of Tay people is as follows: Lang Son (16 per cent)

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Table 3. Distribution of the 6 largest ethnic groups by socio-economic regions, 2009

Ethnic group	Total population	Red River Delta	Northern Midland and Mountain	North and South Central Coast	Central Highland	Southeast	Mekong River Delta
Entire country	85,846,997	19,584,287	11,053,590	18,835,154	5,115,135	14,067,361	17,191,470
Kinh	73,594,427	19,281,129	5,009,353	17,027,036	3,309,836	13,155,502	15,811,571
Tay	1,626,392	57,063	1,400,519	12,524	104,798	50,704	784
Thai	1,550,423	9,363	967,801	523,165	40,556	9,057	481
Muong	1,268,963	75,222	788,909	345,943	35,544	22,702	643
Khmer	1,260,640	284	370	1,278	2,436	72,796	1,183,476
Mong	1,068,189	2,826	971,515	43,889	48,877	992	90