



# SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

# of Gender Inequality in Vietnam



Findings of a research study between 2012-2015







INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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**Supported by**

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**Ha Noi 2015**

# FOREWORD BY

# HE MR HUGH BORROWMAN

## AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR TO VIETNAM



Vietnam is remarkable for the strides that it has made in promoting women's status and possibilities, in almost all spheres of their lives. At a national level, women are active contributors to the economy, and occupy senior roles in politics alongside men. At the household level, women have more assured access to good health outcomes and to higher education than they did even a decade ago. However, gender disparities remain, and particularly on issues that are key to ongoing improvements in women's circumstances. Women are represented in lower numbers than men in governance at all levels, particularly sub-national; women face cultural and networking barriers to career promotion; and women have only a fraction of the access to land title and assets in their name as do men. In a country

that has seen great transformations in maternal mortality reductions, per capita income and educational attainment of women, why are some areas slower to evolve?

This study on "Socio-cultural Factors Influencing Gender Inequality in Vietnam", conducted by the Institute for Social Development Studies, is an effort to provide the answer to that question. This is one of the first comprehensive studies of its kind in Vietnam which looks beyond the surface of statistics on men and women, in order to give light and meaning the social and cultural factors that set their destinies.

The Australian Embassy, joining Ford Foundation and Oxfam Novib, was pleased to support ISDS to undertake this research. It offers important glimpses into the lives of Vietnamese women throughout the country – tracing them through their formative family and schooling influences, through to their workplace encounters and their circumstances as partners and parents. We have been struck by the theme of sacrifice that imbues this report, so that women can fulfil the so-called 'heavenly' duty of caring for their family and maintaining domestic harmony. However, it is encouraging to note the number of areas where men and women are increasingly making joint decisions and sharing in home tasks, particularly among the younger generation. These gender dynamics are never still, and thus create opportunities for positive change.

We believe that the research findings constitute a solid basis and spur for policy and action to better promote gender equality and women's advancement in Vietnam. We encourage you to join all of the partners to this study in that effort.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report is based on the research project “Socio-cultural Factors Influencing Gender Inequality in Vietnam” carried out by the Institute for Social Development Studies between 2012 and 2015. The project would not have been possible without support from a number of agencies, organizations and individuals.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender equality in Vietnam has improved significantly thanks to the strong commitment of the Government, efforts by civil society and changes by Vietnamese men and women over the last few decades. In many areas, the gaps between men and women have narrowed. Women are healthier, better educated, as well as politically and economically stronger. Women's voices are now increasingly heard in decision-making processes both in the public and domestic spheres. Yet this achievement has not met expectations. The most recent Government report on the implementation of the National Program on Gender Equality in the five year period of 2011-2015 has recognized that the progress of gender equality in Vietnam is still slow, sometimes stagnant, or even regressive in various areas (MOLISA, 2015). According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2014, the rank of Vietnam has regressed over the last decade from a rank of 42 in 2007 to 76 in 2014 (World Economic Forum, 2014). This reality raises serious questions: What are the causes of the slow progress or even regression of gender equality? How to address the challenges and barriers hindering the efforts of the Government and the people of Vietnam in bridging the gap between genders?

Answers to these questions can be found in numerous research studies conducted within last two decades. The result of such research is insight into the experiences and perceptions of research participants. The research has provided vital information for the development of policies and programs to reduce gender inequality in the country and

has led to the passage of several laws, such as the Law on Marriage and Family, the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention. Yet, while a considerable amount of scientific knowledge regarding gender inequality in various domains in Vietnam has been produced, most research is based on qualitative studies.

This research study "Social factors Determining Gender Inequality in Vietnam" presented in this report is an attempt to contribute to the joint effort to answer these questions. The overall objective of this research study is to understand the dimensions, nature and determinants of gender inequality in Vietnam. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. describe gender practice and gender attitudes in Vietnam
- ii. explore factors that contribute to gender inequality in Vietnam
- iii. develop recommendations for improvement of policy and intervention programs for the promotion of gender equality in Vietnam.

This research study conducted by the Institute for Social Development Studies between 2012 to 2015 with support from The Ford Foundation, Oxfam Novib, and the Australian Government. The study includes a nationally representative survey covering 4212 women and 4212 men aged between 18-65 from 9 cities and provinces, namely Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh City, Đà Nẵng, Thái Bình, Phú Thọ, Lâm Đồng, Bình Thuận, Vĩnh Long and Tây Ninh, and a qualitative research undertaken in Hà Nội, Hưng Yên, Hồ Chí Minh City and Long An.

## FINDINGS

Traditional rigid gender perceptions towards men's and women's values and roles are found as underlying causes of gender inequality in Vietnam. While other aspects of this longstanding perception have weakened over time, the value of the role of family caregiver assigned to women is still firmly sustained in the minds and behaviors of Vietnamese men and women across all social strata. Women, in particular, deeply internalize this value and, in many cases, are willing to compromise their individual well-being and advancement.

The research however also found that this perception of women as primary family caregivers does not necessarily have the same influence across the country. The factors of regional, social and cultural context can color the influence in different shades. This perception can also be altered with the improvement of education and exposure to more positive role models.

### Education

Gender inequality in education is partly caused by the prescribed caregiver role of women in the family. Women have significantly lower levels of education compared to men. Women are more likely than men to fall within the groups with a lower-secondary school education and lower (70.78% and 60.28%, respectively) while less likely in the groups with upper-secondary school or higher levels of education (29.22% and 40.33%, respectively). Young women are expected to sacrifice their formal education for the benefit of their male siblings and tend to give up their formal education to perform family caregiver roles. Women also internalize the attitudes that women

should have a lower educational attainment than their husbands in order to maintain familial harmony.

### Employment and work

More than 20% of women covered by the survey did not work because of household chores, compared to 2% of men. Moreover, among those who worked, women are more likely to work in agriculture or in the informal sector. As a consequence, women are more likely to pay their social and health insurance out of their own pocket. Yet, only one fifth of those who worked in the private sector and around 5% to 6% of those who worked in the informal sector have social insurance, and less than half of these two groups have medical insurance. Clearly, women's rights and access to social welfare and security are much more limited, including pregnancy and childbirth benefits.

Women are less likely to get promoted or given a chance to improve their professional qualifications, especially among those who work in the state sector. The number of women promoted to a higher position is less than half that of men. The number of women who attended trainings or conferences is often less than three fourths that of men.

In family agriculture production, women tend to undertake almost all 11 tasks which the research itemised, while men primarily undertake only 2 tasks: ploughing/treating the soil and spraying pesticides. In raising animals and fish farming, women also undertake 9 out of 11 tasks, while men primarily undertake only two tasks: buying and maintaining machinery and harvesting/fishing. In general, the division of labor between men and women is more equal in households working in

industries, handicrafts, service, or business, with more women in charge of managing expenditure and revenue in these cases.

### **Division of domestic work and decision making in the family**

Domestic work remains women's main responsibility. Women undertake 12 out of 14 tasks which the research itemised, ranging from cooking to caring for senior or sick family members. Men primarily undertake one to two tasks, including the maintenance and fixing of household appliances, and representing family in contacting local authorities. Men and women share the two tasks of weddings/funerals and praying to ancestors equally.

Two thirds of women compared to one quarter of men reported regularly doing housework during their childhood before the age of 18. It's worth noting that men who often did housework in their childhood are more likely to share housework in their current family.

Women undertake almost all tasks regarding the care of children, ranging from feeding and bathing to nursing a sick child. The task that men undertook the most often was attending children's school meetings.

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes are widely prevalent among people across all social strata. More women than men believe that the husband is the family pillar and the wife's "heavenly" granted task is taking care of children and family members. Indeed, while both men and women reported a relatively equal participation in decision making on most family matters, the majority agreed that men tend to be

the one who has the final say in more important matters relating to land, housing and purchasing valuable assets, while women are in charge of daily matters.

Nevertheless, the tendency towards more gender equality in division of labor and decision making in the family is getting clearer, especially among men and women of younger age groups, with higher educational levels.

### **Property ownership**

Ownership or co-ownership of the most valuable property of the family plays an important role in bargaining power relations between the spouses. However, almost half of women do not own residential land and only one fifth of women own land or houses, while more than half of men are sole owners of land or houses. It is the men who often own the most valuable property, including production facilities and vehicles.

### **Marriage and family**

In Vietnam today, residing in a husband's family home is still a more common than residing in a wife's family home. This leads to the husband's parents receiving more care and assistance. This traditional practice limits the role of the daughter in her birthparents' family and strengthens the values as well as the role of the sons.

While research findings show that the majority of respondents reported holding more equitable gender attitudes on the values and roles of both sons and daughters, in reality there are still couples who reported applying common scientific and medical methods to have a son.

There are however different perspectives on



Women reported significantly **greater levels of all forms of domestic violence** than men.

sons and daughters. Sons are preferred mainly because of the traditional symbolic values related to their role in family continuation and ancestor worship. Daughters are preferred for pragmatic values associated with their roles in providing care and emotional support to their parents.

Inequality also exists in asset distribution. More families distributed or planned to distribute assets to sons, especially when it came to land and houses. In some families, daughters are given a small amount of assets, mainly money and other non-land related assets. Yet the practice of equal share is more prevalent in the south and is becoming more visible among young people in other parts of the country.

### **Intimate relationship and domestic violence**

The care and support that women are expected to provide as family caregivers is also manifested in their intimate life. Married women were far less likely to initiate sexual activities and were less satisfied with their sexual life than men. At the same time, the pressure of family planning rests on the women's shoulders with more than two thirds of currently married couples practicing female family planning methods. Nevertheless, men of a younger age and with a higher educational level are more likely to share family planning responsibilities with their spouse.

In general, women reported significantly greater levels of all forms of domestic violence than men. More than 13% of currently married women reported experiencing unwanted sex within the last 12 months. The belief that it is natural for men to commit violence because

they have the right is still common. Most cases of domestic violence (98.57%) sunk into silence, implying that regardless of family background, this issue should be seen as a private matter and should be kept behind closed doors.

Double standards tolerating men's freedom in sexual activities and blaming women for the same conducts are still prevalent among 50% of the surveyed population. Women, however, hold stricter attitudes towards other women. Those who hold the double standards are more likely to have an unequal sexual relationship where men tend to be the one who controls both sex lives and women tend to report experiencing unwanted sex and have less sexual satisfaction.

### **Socio-political participation and knowledge on gender related laws**

Women's family caregiving and role expectations and the wide acceptance of the cultural gender assumption that men are better for leadership positions are key barriers limiting women's abilities to engage in socio-political activities.

Women were less likely to participate in political activities and were less likely to work in their local government. The percentage of women who are party members is less than half of that of men. The percentage of women working in local government is three times lower than that of men. The number of men was more than double that of women in a leadership position in the Party Committees, and seven times higher than that of women in the People Committee.

In general, there is little awareness of gender related laws such as the Law on Gender Equality, the Law on Marriage and Family, and the Law on

Control and Prevention of Domestic Violence. Between 15% and 30% of people had never heard about the laws. More than two thirds of them had only heard about the names and had vague knowledge of those laws. Only 3% to 6% reported having a clear understanding of the laws.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To address gender inequality in Vietnam, it is crucial to liberate women from their endless domestic caregiver tasks without sacrificing the wellbeing of families. Policy intervention should:

### 1. Alter the traditional rigid gender attitudes on values and the roles of women.

This includes a set of educational programs and activities for different target populations:

Public education to alter the traditional gender attitudes that rigidly confine women to the role of caregivers and to promote the perception that caring is a human attribute, and both men and women are capable of taking on this role. Public education should also promote the value of both son and daughter to reduce son preference and eliminate sex selection practices.

Special programs targeting women to i) help them to be aware that their core value is not confined to caregiver roles; ii) inspire women's autonomy and assertiveness to take an active part in social and economic life; iii) encourage women to assume leadership roles, both within and outside family contexts.

Promotion of men's caring role through nationwide campaigns to sensitize men, convincing them housework is also their responsibility, and develop a series of interactive communication

programs with positive role models to motivate men to do housework and create awareness of their ability to handle this role just as well as women do.

Pre-marriage counseling program for young men and women to include sensitization of equal share of housework, including family planning and reproductive health, domestic violence as well as gender and family related laws.

Educating children on the equal sharing of housework and equipping boys and girls with skills for doing housework from an early age through formal and family education.

### 2. Enforcing implementation of gender- and women-related laws. This should include:

Innovative and interactive educational program on gender-related laws including Law of Gender Equality, Law of Marriage and Family, Law of Control and Prevention of Domestic Violence and other laws to raise the public's awareness of legal rights and obligations of men and women in public and private spheres. For example, people should be aware that the housework done in the family by a spouse is regarded as income-generating labor as it is defined by the 2014 Law of Marriage and Family.

Enforcing implementation of the 2013 Land Law to ensure women's entitlement to land.

Enforcing the implementation of the Civil Code on inheritance to promote equal share of family assets, especially land and housing as one measure to improve women's status and economic power.

Applying paternity leave in both public and private sectors.

Improve the coverage of social welfare and social security schemes for men and women

working in the private, agricultural and informal sector to ensure their access to their rights and benefits, especially women's rights and benefits related to their reproductive functions.

### **3. Improve key social services to reduce the burden of housework.**

Along with the educational program to promote the equal share of housework, it is important to support families through the provision of sufficient and quality services of childcare, health care and care for the elderly.

### **4. Develop and implement a policy to facilitate access of women to career opportunities through professional training.**

Women are less likely to be promoted or attend training or conferences, partly due to their caregiver roles in the family. Gender sensitive policy and strategy should be developed to ensure women get access to opportunities and encourage women to take these opportunities for their advancement.

### **5. Further research**

Vietnam is undergoing rapid social change, including changes in gender relations. Therefore updated and research-based evidence is needed to inform laws and policies and strengthen law enforcement in a timely fashion.

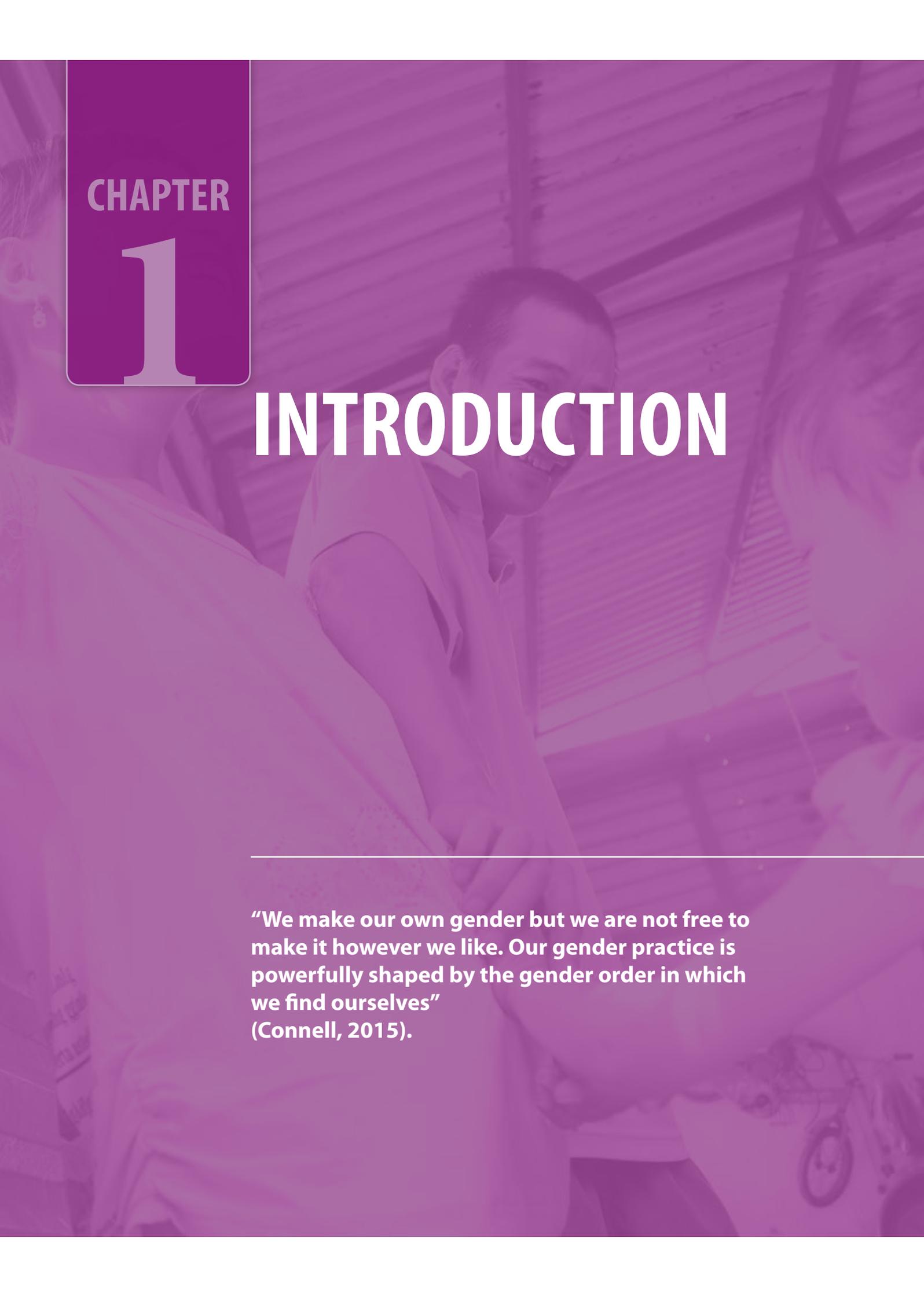
There is a particular need for research to document more equitable gender practices that exist in various domains or in different regions across the country.

So far, most of the efforts are oriented towards women at the absence of men. Yet gender equality will never be reached if men continue to refuse

sharing the responsibility of domestic work, be dominant over decision making in both private and public spheres, and perpetuate violence against their partners. Therefore, research studies on men and masculinities are critically needed to help develop an informed and comprehensive policy intervention to promote positive behaviors and attitudes in men, thus contributing to address gender gaps, gender equality and the well-being of both men and women.



To address gender inequality in Vietnam, policy interventions should **alter the traditional rigid gender attitudes** on values and roles of women.



CHAPTER

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

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**“We make our own gender but we are not free to make it however we like. Our gender practice is powerfully shaped by the gender order in which we find ourselves”  
(Connell, 2015).**

## BACKGROUND

Gender equality in Vietnam has improved significantly thanks to the strong commitment of the Government, efforts by civil society and changes in Vietnamese men and women over the last few decades. In many areas, the gaps between men and women have narrowed. Women are healthier, better educated, as well as politically and economically stronger. Women's voices are now increasingly heard in decision-making processes both in the public and domestic spheres. Yet this achievement has not met the expectations. The most recent Government report on the implementation of the National Program on Gender Equality in the five year period of 2011-2015 has recognized that the progress of gender equality in Vietnam is still slow, sometimes stagnant, or even regressive in various areas (MOLISA, 2015). According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2014, the rank of Vietnam has regressed over the last decade from a rank of 42 in 2007 to 76 in 2014 (World Economic Forum, 2014). This reality raises serious questions: What are the causes of the slow progress or even regression of gender equality? How to address the challenges and barriers hindering the efforts of the Government and the people of Vietnam in bridging the gap between genders?

Answers to these questions can be found in numerous studies conducted within last two decades. The result of such research is insight into the experiences and perceptions of research participants. The research has provided vital information for the development of policies and programs to reduce gender inequality in the country and has led to the passage of several laws,

such as the Law on Marriage and Family, the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention. Yet, while a considerable amount of scientific knowledge regarding gender inequality in various domains in Vietnam has been produced, most research is based on qualitative studies.

Our knowledge base about gender in Vietnam lacks large scale, quantitative information, which would provide a broad profile of various gender inequalities in education, employment, marriage, family relationships, the division of labor, health, sexuality and reproduction, property ownership and rights, inheritance, and social and political participation. A large, quantitative study of gender dynamics in Vietnam will meet the needs, not only of academics, but also policy makers, government authorities, civil society leaders, and international donors. Such large-scale and generalizable data will help policy makers and service providers make informed decisions in their work in order to reduce gender gaps in the economic, social and political lives of Vietnamese people. In addition to data that provides quantitative measurements of the manifestation of gender inequality, it is also essential to have data which can be analyzed to give answers on the factors, or determinants of inequality.

In an effort to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding on gender inequality in Vietnam, with funding from The Ford Foundation, Oxfam Novib and the Government of Australia, Institute for Social Development Studies designed and conducted a research study on the social

factors determining gender inequality in Vietnam. The study was designed to produce an empirical foundation for a better understanding of the key issues regarding gendered power relationships in Vietnam, particularly the social determinants of gender inequality.

The overall objective of this research study is to understand the dimensions, nature and determinants of gender inequality in Vietnam. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- 1) describe gender practice and gender attitudes in Vietnam
- 2) explore factors which contribute to gender inequality in Vietnam
- 3) develop recommendations for improvements in policy and intervention programs for the promotion of gender equality in Vietnam.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### GENDER AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

Gender – long conceptualized as an inevitable offshoot of genetics and anatomical differences between men and women– is often considered a “natural” factor (versus “a nurturing factor”) in influencing an individual’s thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This conceptualization, however, has been employed to justify the systems that govern and sustain a hierarchical, gender-based division of labor and inequality in marriage, reproduction, parenting, education, legal rights, and property ownership and heritage (Connell, 1987).

The distinction between nature and nurture, between biology and culture has played a prominent role in social science theory and feminist

movements for gender equality for several decades. Within the field of gender studies, the nature/nurture debate used to be addressed by making a distinction between biologically determined sex differences or “sex”—which was thought to be an unalterable fact rooted in genetics, physiology, and genitalia—and the culturally determined roles or “gender” roles that adhere to people who are born into either sex category (Delphy, 1993; Schilt, 2010). Whereas the power-laden and unequal gendered status quo has often been defended on the premise that the male/female, masculine/feminine binary is biologically rooted and therefore unalterable, a number of social scientists, including the symbolic interactionists in sociology (Goffman, 1977; Fenstermaker & West, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and the queer theorists in humanities (most famously, Judith Butler, 1990) have argued that gender is an irreducibly social concept.

Patricia Martin, after reviewing scholarly work on social institutions from the past century, including classic work by Talcott Parsons and more recent work by Anthony Giddens, proposed twelve criteria for social institutions. According to Martin, social institutions have historical roots, encompass recurrent and persistent collective attitudes, behavioral patterns, and procedures that may or may not be codified by the state, and encourage certain behaviors, while inhibiting others. Finally, different social institutions—education and legal systems, for example—are interconnected and frequently reinforce one another (Martin, 2004).

Based on these criteria, Martin and similar scholars (e.g. Connell, 1987) argue that gender is, indeed, a social institution codified through a set of recurrent and persistent collective attitudes,



“Gender must be understood as a **social structure**. It is not an expression of biology or a fixed dichotomy in human lives or character.”  
**Connell, 2015**

behavioral patterns, and procedures that prescribe what can or cannot be done—or how things can be done—for both sexes. Moreover, these attitudinal, behavioral, and procedural patterns for normative gender roles have historical roots and are passed down through generations.

At the same time, interactionist theories of gender, which posit that the stability of gender depend upon its social reproduction in day-to-day interactions, imply that the maintenance of the masculine/feminine gender binary requires a lot of investment by social actors. That is, individual people have to explicitly re-create gender in micro level interactions on a daily basis, which also opens up numerous opportunities for gender norms to be disrupted or troubled (West & Zimmerman, 1987). The stability of gender vis-à-vis its interactional reproduction can be better understood if one accounts for the enormous impact of long-held ideologies on individual behavior and the degree to which formal social institutions distribute rewards and penalties according to conformity with gender roles (Schilt, 2010). Even though people can and do disrupt the integrity of gender roles through everyday behaviors, the survival of gender as a relatively stable construct is achieved, for example, through the educational system, which socializes children to “behave properly” in accordance with the gender role that corresponds to their physical body, and the legal system, not only rewards those who adhere to the institution of gender, but also punishes those who deviate from it. Therefore, this reconceptualization of gender as a social institution can help researchers and policy makers critically analyze and understand the social and

dynamic character of gender, as well as its stubborn persistence in the face of gender inequality.

Connell, in her most recent work, has brought gender scholarship a step further. She points out the complications of defining gender as the cultural difference between men and women based on the biological division between male and female. Human life, she argues, is not simple enough to be divided into two realms, nor is the human character to be divided into two types. Additionally, the definition of gender, which emphasizes difference, is unable to explain cases such as those of homosexual relationships or the small psychological differences found between women and men. Moreover, the definition based on the dichotomy between men and women fails to explain the huge differences found among individual men and women, e.g. the difference between men who are violent and men who are not violent. Lastly, the definition of gender which emphasizes personal characteristics is no longer valid as the modern economy has evolved in such a way that the shared capacities of men and women and their cooperation is required.

Connell therefore calls for a move from a focus on difference to a focus on relations. In this sense, she states, gender must be understood as a social structure. It is not an expression of biology or a fixed dichotomy in human lives or character. It is a pattern in our social arrangements and the everyday activities shaped by those arrangements. Thus, gender is defined by Connell as “the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinction between bodies into social processes.” (Connell, 2015).

## GENDER RELATIONS AND INEQUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM

Gender relations and gender inequality in contemporary Vietnam are complex issues since, as a social institution, gender is influenced by innumerable historical and socio-economic factors and therefore changes in accordance with social shifts. While the fast globalization and modernization of Vietnam is expected to lead to more equality between Vietnamese men and women, several studies have found the opposite is true. Scholars, while acknowledging the considerable improvement in economic and social aspects in the lives of men and women in Vietnam, still point out that gender inequality is persistent and continues to impact women's lives (Higgins, 2015; Nguyen & Simkin, 2015; Nguyen-vo, 2004; Tran, 2004; Werner, 2004; Werner & Belanger, 2002; Long, Truitt, & Anh, 2000). Similarly, the Social Institution & Gender Index by OECD has lowered Vietnam's ranking over the past several years, from 31 out of 102 countries in 2009 to 43 out of 86 countries in 2012 (Social Institution & Gender Index, 2014).

To better account for the complexity of gender in Vietnam, it is important to review the history of gendered ideologies and norms in the country, especially the influence of Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnamese society.

### Confucianism in Vietnamese Culture

For centuries, Vietnam has been influenced by China's Confucian culture, which emphasizes patrilineal (sons carry the family lineage and inheritance), patrilocal (young married couples live



**Vestiges of Confucianist ideologies** existing in contemporary Vietnam are still strong enough for men and women to feel torn between their ideals and their current practices causing suffering for both genders.

with or close to the husband's family), and patriarchal (male family members share the most decision power) kinship. These dominant ideologies have guided practices and resource allocation among Vietnamese men and women. Certain scholars have argued that these ideologies may have had a greater influence on elite populations and that Vietnamese women have shared more power in their day-to-day decision making (with their husbands) than their counterparts in China, partly due to the Southeast Asian cultural roots of Vietnam (Hirschman & Loi, 1996; Hirschman & Minh, 2002). However, other studies have found numerous vestiges of these ideologies in contemporary Vietnam, some of which are still strong enough for men and women to feel torn between their ideals and their current practices, causing suffering to both genders (Quach, 2008; Vu, 2005; Phan, 2005; Ngo, 2004; Gammeltoft, 1998).



### **August Revolution and the Change of Social and Cultural Norms and Economic Activities**

Gender liberation was a crucial part of the August 1945 revolution, thus Vietnam attempted to increase gender equality as part of its own revolutionary project, most notably through legislation and social programming. Such policies were relatively successful during and immediately after the Vietnam War, and Vietnam was substantively ahead of other countries with similar income levels on several gender indices, including literacy among women, women's political participation, women's labor force participation rates, and reproductive health services (Schuler, Anh, Ha, Minh, Mai, Thien, 2006). Despite all of these progressive efforts and substantial gains in gender equality for Vietnamese women, it has also been found that women in Vietnam were expected to follow both the socialist work ethic in the public space and the

Confucian ethic regarding family in the private space. In other words, Vietnamese women not only needed to be "good at national tasks," but also "good at household tasks." This was reflected in the Three Criteria Women Campaign by the national Women Union in the decade of 1990s, which stated that women should "study actively, work creatively, raise children well, and build happy families." Such demands placed tremendous pressure on women (Schuler, Anh, Ha, Minh, Mai, Thien, 2006).

Since Vietnam enacted economic reforms in the late 1980s there have been several major changes in multiple domains of Vietnamese society. These changes have also impacted the institution of gender, as social and economic shifts often reshape gender relations and gender inequality (Ungar, 2000). However, a nuanced analysis of gender in the face of these changes has yet to be undertaken. Therefore, to better understand how gender, as a prominent social institution, influences

Vietnamese men and women and shapes their practices and well-being, there is an urgent need to document the contents of the institution of gender, namely, the collective attitudes, behavioral patterns, and procedures surrounding gender, gender relations, and gender equality in contemporary Vietnamese society. As gender can intersect with other institutions and can operate with and through other institutions, such as family, education, and legal systems, it is also necessary to systematically investigate gender relations, as well as gender-based resource distribution, in those social institutions. A firm and comprehensive understanding of the institution of gender can form a solid basis for evidence-based policy implementation to further close the gender gaps in multiple domains of social life in contemporary Vietnamese society.

## STUDY METHODS

This research study has been conducted in two phases. The first phase started in summer 2012 and ended by March 2014. The major tasks of this phase were designing and conducting a survey which was followed by a descriptive analysis of the data collected. The second phase took place within October 2014 and September 2015. Throughout this phase, more in-depth analysis of quantitative data and an additional qualitative research were conducted.

The study design, tools and protocol was approved by Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Institute for Social Development Studies. The study team, including the research assistants, were trained to be aware of the sensitivity of the area

being explored in the study and several steps were taken to minimize discomfort to study participants. Participants in the study were fully informed of the purpose of the study, the research objectives, the confidentiality of the data, and each gave verbal consent for their participation in the study. Standard procedures were followed for ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

### Study tools

For the survey, a structured interview-administered paper questionnaire was developed for an approximate 60-minute interview. The questionnaire consisted of 225 questions covering 7 topics:

- 1) Socio-demographic characteristics
- 2) Education
- 3) Work and employment
- 4) Marriage and Family
- 5) Division of work and decision making
- 6) Social and political participation
- 7) Knowledge of gender laws and policies

There are two sets of questions in each of the five domains, namely education, work and employment, marriage and family, division of work and decision-making and social and political participation. The first set of questions focuses on the respondent's gender practice while the second set of questions aims to explore the respondent's attitudes/perceptions on the ability, values or roles of men and women in this domain.

The question guides for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions also focus on these five domains and aim to acquire more insight into people's perception and attitudes regarding gender roles and values in these domains.



The survey was conducted with 4212 men and 4212 women **aged 18 to 65** in nine provinces/cities in Vietnam.

### Sampling and Data Collection

The survey was conducted with 4212 men and 4212 women aged 18 to 65 in nine provinces/cities in Vietnam: Hà Nội, Thái Bình, Phú Thọ in the North; Đà Nẵng, Lâm Đồng and Bình Thuận in Central Vietnam; Hồ Chí Minh City, Vĩnh Long and Tây Ninh in the South. Criteria for the selection of the provinces was developed to assure that each selected province was representative of the overall socioeconomic conditions of the region from which that province was drawn. Then, for each province, a multistage probability sampling method was applied to ensure that the selected sample would represent the province's population. To accomplish this, we cooperated with provincial authorities to obtain lists of all communes/wards, including the most updated figures on households. These figures were necessary for the appropriate selection of communes/wards.

In the second stage, households were selected from the sampled communes/wards. The sample size needed to estimate each of the variables in the survey with a 95% confidence interval and a  $p < 0.05$ , the minimum sample size was 1050-1100 households per province, for a total sample size of 8,424. Based on the general cost model (Kish, 1995), the estimated optimum number (most economical) of households to select per sampled commune/ward within each province averages approximately 65. The number of randomly selected communes/wards in each province is therefore 16. As the number of wards and communes is not very large, the number of selected wards and communes is not exactly proportional to the total number of communes/wards or households in rural and urban areas.

This issue was resolved by adjusting the sampling fractions of households in urban and rural areas. At that point, the sampling fractions calculated for the corresponding rural (or urban) area and an equal probability systematic random technique was applied to select households. The sampling method of the survey guarantees that both men and women were selected, and that both groups would be representative of the population in each of the provinces.

### Analytic Approaches

The data collection of the survey was conducted between November 2012 and January 2013, and a data entry form was created in March 2013, using the Epidata program. Epidata is a simple but powerful software package that allows for data control and check during the data entry process. Data entry took place from April to June 2013 and was completed by a team comprised of nine frontline data entry staff and two supervisors. Prior to beginning the data entry, all staff was thoroughly trained to use the Epidata program and to enter survey data accurately. The two supervisors closely managed and supported the staff to ensure proper workflow, high quality data entry, cooperation between team members, and the confidentiality of respondents. During the process of data entry, regular team meetings were scheduled to discuss progress in the data entry process, discuss data entry anomalies, and review consistency. A total of 8,325 questionnaires were entered with single data entry. Data were stored in a passcode secured file.

The data were then imputed to address missing data and other issues. Preliminary data analysis was carried out in the second half of

2013. A three-step data analysis process was conducted, as recommended by Heeringa and colleagues (Heeringa, West, & Berglund, 2010). First, the sampling weight was recomputed to check the robustness of the estimations. Second, descriptive and inferential statistical tests were conducted with adjustments for sampling designs. The Horvitz-Thompson estimator was used to estimate the population total and mean values, taking into account unequal sampling weights. The Huber-White robust estimator was used to compute the standard errors for statistical inferences. Domain analysis was applied in estimating the subpopulations so that only the corresponding subsamples were used for mean estimation, while the entire sample was used for standard-error computation. Third, F and Chi-square tests with a second-order Rao-Scott correction were used for binary comparisons between men and women. All analyses were conducted using the commercial statistical software package Stata 13 (StataCorp. 2013). The SVY procedure in Stata, which takes into account survey designs and unequal sampling weights, was used throughout the analysis. The descriptive report with major findings was produced by Spring 2014 as results of the first phase.

The second phase of this research study took place within October 2014 and September 2015. This phase comprises further in-depth analysis of the quantitative data and the conducting of a qualitative component. In-depth analysis of quantitative data focused on identifying gender inequality in the domains of education, work and employment, marriage and family,

property ownership, division of labor, political and social participation. In each domain, the analysis attempts to find how gender inequality is enacted in daily life and is expressed in people's perception and attitudes regarding gender aspects of this domain. For example, in the domain of education, the study attempts to reveal inequality between women and men as well as among men and among women with different backgrounds, as well as people's perception/attitudes toward ability, and the values or roles of each gender regarding education.

For tracking gender inequality in practices, the descriptive and inferential statistics were used as well as crosstabulation between dependent and other independent variables such as: age groups, education, occupation, living area, region, ethnic groups, quintile income. All crosstabulation includes a statistical significance test: Mann-Whitney test or Kruskal-Wallis test for quantitative variables, and Chi square and Fisher's exact test for qualitative variables. In addition, correlation and regression were also applied to examine the association between independent variables and gender practices.

To examine gender bias in respondents' perceptions, four steps of score analysis were applied to questions on perception/attitudes toward various gender values or roles. (1) For each statement on value, capacity or role of men/women, the answers of the respondents were recoded. For instance, disagree is recoded as 0, partly agree equals 1 and agree is 2, so that the higher score reflects more gender bias. (2) To calculate the total score of the statements, use the median of points to create the "cut-off point" to divide respondents

into two groups: with gender bias or inequitable attitudes (total score greater than the median) and with less gender bias or more equitable gender attitudes (total score equal or below the median). (3) Define socio-demographic characteristics of the group with inequitable attitudes. (4) Examine the association between gender perception/attitudes and gender practices.

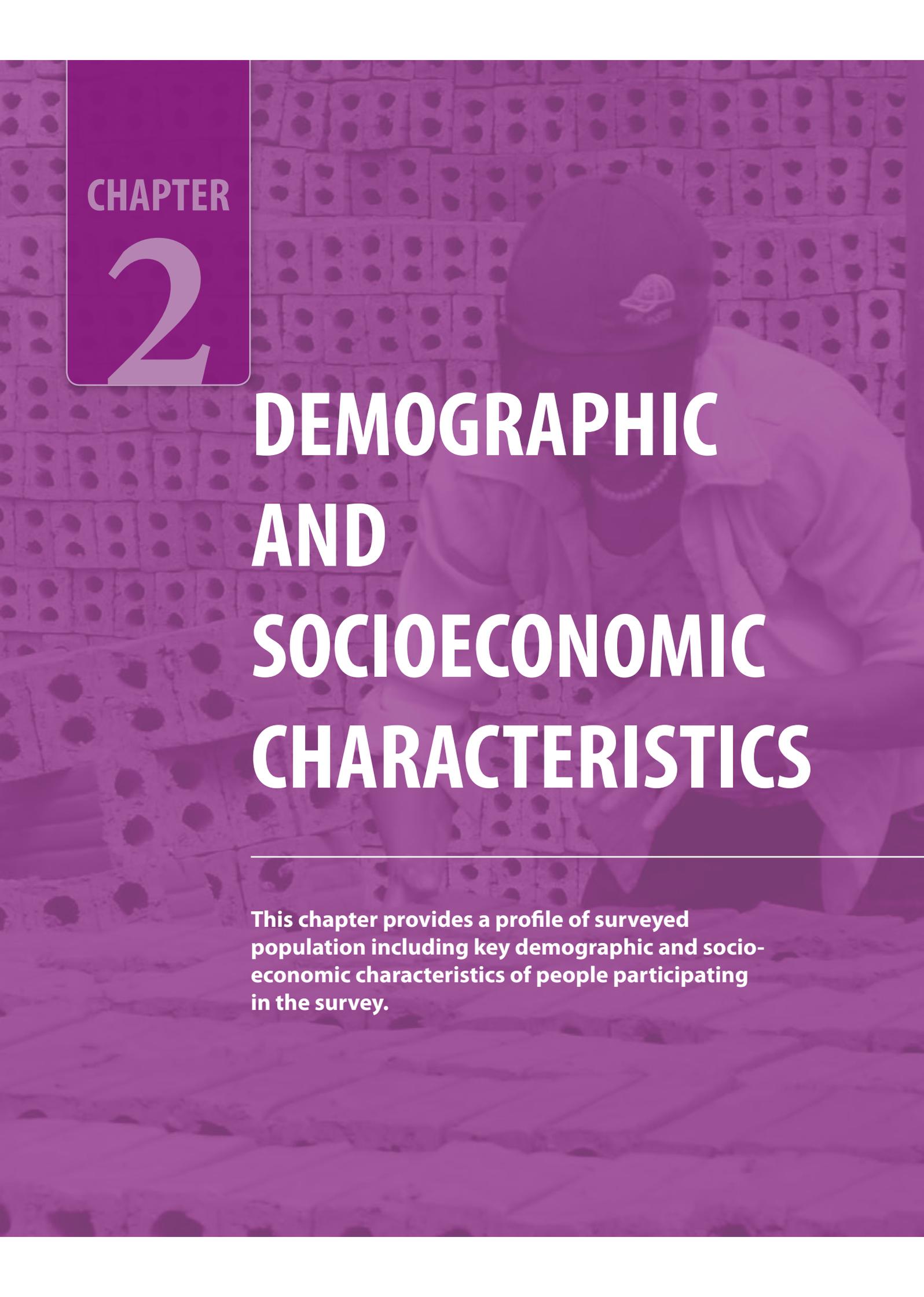
#### **Challenge and Limitations of data**

Gender is a vast area and has been studied intensively during the last two decades. Therefore, this study does not attempt to provide a complete picture of gender inequality in Vietnam but focuses only on key domains of gender inequality which may have implications for more direct and precise policy improvements and interventions.

The major challenge of this study is how to identify the factors determining gender inequality in Vietnam. Not a single social process occurs independently but is often intertwined with or crosscut by many others. Therefore the analysis presented in this report is an exercise to understand which factors are comparatively more prominent among those that shape gender practice and gender attitudes, rather than to single-out a specific factor as the only determining force.

A general limitation of this study could arise from response bias, which is found unavoidable in most social research. Moreover, in the more 'sensitive' questions, especially those about violence, sexuality or sex selection practices, respondents may tend to give responses they believe to be socially and politically acceptable as "right" to please the interviewer.





CHAPTER

# 2

# DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

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This chapter provides a profile of surveyed population including key demographic and socio-economic characteristics of people participating in the survey.

## GENDER STRUCTURE

The overall gender distribution was equal between women and men in the surveyed population, with estimated proportions of 50.67% and 49.33% respectively. These percentages are estimated based on the national population sizes of 23,600,000 women and 22,900,000 men aged between 18 and 65.

## AGE STRUCTURE

The survey sample is of the age range between 18 and 65 at the time of survey. The average age of the surveyed population was 43.10 years old at the time of survey. Women and men were approximately the same age ( $p = 0.604$ ). After breaking the sample into discrete age group cohorts, we found that the two younger age groups (18-24 and 25-34) comprised a relatively smaller proportion of the study sample compared to older age groups. This is consistent with data indicating that Vietnam has a rapidly aging population (UNFPA, 2011). The majority of the survey population fell into the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups, as these two groups comprised more than 50 percent of the survey population. Women and men were equally represented within each of the age group cohorts ( $p = 0.330$ ). See Table 2.1 for summaries. In our analysis the two groups of 45-54 and 55 or older were combined into one age group of 45 and older since both share similar characteristics in the domains under survey.

## ETHNICITY

Nearly 90 percent of the survey population belonged to the Kinh ethnic group. About 10 percent of the population belonged to other ethnic groups and 2.38 percent of the survey population identified as Chinese in ethnicity. Note that the distributions of ethnic groups were significantly different at the 0.05 level, and women in the survey population were more likely to identify as Chinese and other ethnicities. See Table 2.1 for summaries.

## EDUCATION LEVEL

On average, about 44.34 percent of the surveyed population had a lower-secondary school education, 22.74 percent had an upper-secondary school degree, 6.77 percent had at least some college education or vocational training, and 4.9 percent had university education or higher. However, about 21.26 percent of the surveyed population had an education level of 5th grade or below. Note that the distribution of education between genders was significantly different and that women were comparably more likely than men to fall within the groups with secondary school and lower levels (70.78% and 60.28% respectively). While about 39.72 percent of men had upper-secondary school degrees or higher, only 29.22% of women had equivalent education levels. See Table 2.1 for summaries.

**Table 2.1: Basic Demographic Backgrounds**

	All	Men	Women	p
	% or mean (SD)	% or mean (SD)	% or mean (SD)	
Age	43.10 (12.11)	43.52 (12.34)	43.32 (11.87)	0.604
<i>Age group</i>				0.330
18-24	8.79	8.85	8.73	
25-34	17.74	17.80	17.68	
35-44	24.72	25.08	24.37	
45-54	28.50	27.24	29.73	
55+	20.24	21.02	19.48	
Ethnicity				0.042
<i>Kinh</i>	87.62	87.86	87.38	
<i>Chines</i>	2.38	2.17	2.59	
<i>Others</i>	10	9.97	10.03	
Education level				0.005
<i>Primary or lower</i>	21.26	18.8	23.66	
<i>Lower-secondary school</i>	44.34	41.48	47.12	
<i>Upper-secondary school</i>	22.74	27.19	18.4	
<i>College/vocational</i>	6.77	7.13	6.41	
<i>University and higher</i>	4.9	5.4	4.41	
Religion				0.045
<i>None</i>	78.54	79.88	79.27	
<i>Buddhism</i>	12.03	10.94	13.08	
<i>Catholic</i>	4.71	4.38	5.02	
<i>Others</i>	4.73	4.79	4.56	
Marital status				<0.001
<i>Currently married</i>	82.14	85.09	79.27	
<i>Widowed</i>	4.71	0.9	8.44	
<i>Divorced</i>	1.83	1.18	2.47	
<i>Separate</i>	0.76	0.39	1.12	
<i>Never married</i>	10.55	12.45	8.7	
Employment status				0.308
<i>Employed</i>	82.50	85.73	79.34	



Among those who are the head of household, **75.64%** are men, only **24.97%** are women.

## RELIGION

Nearly 80% of the population did not affiliate officially with any religions. This is perhaps due to the legacy of anti-religion campaigns after the revolution. Among those who claimed specific affiliation, 12.03 percent identified as Buddhist, 4.71 percent identified as Christian, and 4 percent affiliated with “other” religions. Note that the distributions of religious affiliations between genders were significantly different, with women are more likely to associate themselves with a religion than men (Table 2.1).

## MARITAL STATUS

A majority of the surveyed population (82.14%) was currently married at the time of survey. About 10 percent of the population had never been married before, 4.71 percent of the population was widowed, and about 2.59 percent was reportedly divorced or separated at the time of survey. Note that marital status was distributed differently across genders; men were more likely to be currently married or never married, while women were more likely to be widowed, divorced, and separated ( $p = 0.045$ ). See Table 2.1 for summaries.

## EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE

On average, 82.50 percent of the surveyed population was working at the time of the survey. The employment rate of men reported

working at the time of the survey is higher than that of women working (85.73% and 79.34% respectively). See Table 2.1 for summaries.

## HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

The average household size was 4.32 (SD = 1.61) people. There was no difference in mean household sizes reported by men and women. However, about 1.32 percent of the population lived alone. Women were slightly more likely than men to live alone with 1.97 percent of women, as opposed to 0.65 percent of men, reporting that they lived alone during the survey period. Finally, among the surveyed population, about 50 percent identified as the head of household; 30.74 percent identified as spouse of the head of household; about 14.45 percent identified as a child; and about 3.29 percent identified as a son/daughter-in-law. All other relatives comprised less than 1 percent of the surveyed population. Note that the distributions of household statuses are significantly different between men and women ( $p = 0.001$ ). Among those who are the head of household, 75.64 percent are men, only 24.97 percent are women. In contrast, about 58 percent of the female population in the surveyed population reported to be the head of household's spouse while only 3 percent of the men reported being a spouse. Among other members of the household, 19.39 percent identified as a son of the household's head; 9.63 percent are daughters and 6.01 percent are daughters-in-law (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2: Household Structure**

	All	Men	Women	p
	% or mean (SD)	% or mean (SD)	% or mean (SD)	
Number of people	4.32 (1.61)	4.32 (1.60)	4.31 (1.64)	0.768
Live Alone	1.32	0.65	1.97	0.072
				< 0.001
Status of interviewee				
1. Household Head	50	75.64	24.97	
2. Spouse	30.74	3.15	57.66	
3. Children	14.45	19.39	9.63	
4. Children in-law	3.29	0.5	6.01	
5. Parent	0.16	0.01	0.3	
6. Nephew/Niece	0.53	0.53	0.52	
7. Sibling	0.45	0.36	0.53	
8. Other relatives	0.21	0.32	0.12	
9. Others	0.18	0.1	0.26	

Finally, in a typical Vietnamese household, 100 percent had an identified head of household; 86.79 percent live with at least one child; 84.94 percent lived with a spouse; 23.76 percent had grandchildren; 22.54 percent had a son/daughter-in-law; 8.21 percent had a parent; and 2.37 percent had a sibling (Table 2.3).

As described in Table 2.4, at the time of the survey, percentage of the nuclear family including parents and children, even the sons- and daughters-in-law, account for 66.81 percent of the total number of households. Multigenerational families, which includes families from 3 generations or more cohabiting, take up to 26.78 percent. Findings include a small percentage (5.09%) of joint families that house relatives or friends. Households of single individuals only account for 1.32 percent.

**Table 2.3: Who is in the Household? (%)**

Household Head	99.94
Children	86.79
Spouse	84.94
Grandchildren	23.76
Children in-law	22.54
Parents or parent	8.21
Sibling	2.37
Other	1.41
Other relatives	1.05
Grandparents	0.26
Aunt or uncle	0.16

**Table 2.4: Classification of families across regions (%)**

	Total	Rural	Urban	North	Central	South
Nuclear	66.81	68.88	64.22	63.33	68.49	67.31
Multigenerational	26.78	26.47	27.17	32.9	25.78	24.44
Joint	5.09	3.38	7.23	2.58	4.29	6.96
Single	1.32	1.27	1.38	1.18	1.44	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>8332</b>	<b>4640</b>	<b>3692</b>	<b>1860</b>	<b>2777</b>	<b>3695</b>

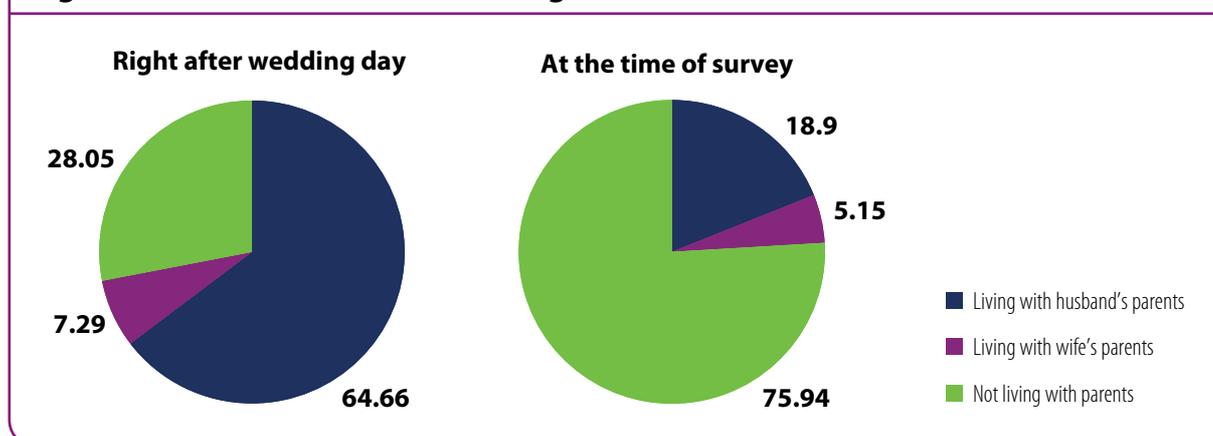
In rural areas, the percentage of nuclear families account for a slightly higher number (66.88%) than that of urban areas (64.22%), perhaps due to housing conditions in the cities being more challenging. Multigenerational families in rural areas account for 26.47 percent, as opposed to 27.17 percent in urban areas. On the contrary, in urban areas percentage of joint households is relatively higher than that in rural areas (Table 2.4).

Multigenerational families in the north account for a third of the total households, while in central Vietnam and in the south this percentage only accounts for a fourth. Meanwhile, joint families in central and south Vietnam account for a higher percentage than those in the north of Vietnam. This finding can be suggestive of the more pronounced traditions of northern Vietnam.

Immediately after marriage, almost two thirds (64.66%) of all couples cohabit (live and eat, or just live) with the husbands' family. Over a fourth

(28.05%) do not live with neither parents nor in-laws. Just over seven percent cohabit with the wife's family, whether eating with them or not. Although this gender difference in cohabitation after marriage was surveyed with the statistical significance at 0.05, overall, the cohabitation models are relatively similar in both genders. Both genders have a high percentage (over 60%) of living and eating with the husband's family, while the cohabitation rate with the wife's family is lower, accounting for only 4.45 percent among men and 8.25 percent among women being surveyed.

However, according to Figure 2.1, we can also appreciate that the rate of couples living with parents changes over time. At the time of the survey, a majority (75.94%) of those married did not live with the wife's or husband's parents. About 19 percent lived with the husband's family, and only over 5 percent lived with the wife's family. Thus, among those that live with parents, the majority live with the husband's family.

**Figure 2.1: Cohabitation models change with time**

## LIVING CONDITIONS AND HOUSING OWNERSHIP

Overall, more than half of the surveyed population reported living in a permanent house, and about 42 percent of the population reported living in semi-permanent house. Only 5.8 percent of the population reported living in temporary house. This was consistent with 95 percent of the surveyed population reporting that they owned the house in which they resided. Slightly less than 5 percent of the population reported living in rental houses or with hosts. Men and women did not differ regarding housing type or ownership. However, the two genders differed in the reported amount of space in their residences. Although, on average, the areas of the houses were 305.33m<sup>2</sup>, men reported their houses to be 333.83m<sup>2</sup>, while women reported

their houses to be only 277.25m<sup>2</sup>. Finally, there was a marginal difference in the number of household goods reported by women versus men. Instead of collecting information on the household's income which proved an uneasy task, this survey uses ownership of household goods as a rough proxy for household wealth. Survey respondents were asked to report which items, from a list of 17 household items, they currently had in their house. Items on the list included a television, stereo system, DVD player, refrigerator, and air conditioner. On average, the surveyed households possessed 6.78 items (SD = 2.86). However, while men reported 6.85 items (SD = 2.83) in their households, women only reported 6.70 items (SD = 2.89). See Table 2.5 for summaries.

**Table 2.5: Living Conditions**

	All	Men	Women	p
	% or mean (SD)	% or mean (SD)	% or mean (SD)	
Housing Types				0.243
1. <i>Villa</i>	0.56	0.68	0.45	
2. <i>Permanent Housing</i>	51.55	51.48	51.61	
3. <i>Semi-permanent Housing</i>	41.82	42.04	41.60	
4. <i>Temporary Housing</i>	5.82	5.48	6.15	
5. <i>Others</i>	0.25	0.32	0.18	
Housing Ownerships				0.156
1. <i>Owned</i>	94.92	95.65	94.21	
2. <i>Rental</i>	1.74	1.44	2.04	
3. <i>Living in with hosts</i>	3.16	2.73	3.57	
4. <i>Illegal residency</i>	0.10	0.07	0.13	
5. <i>Others</i>	0.08	0.11	0.06	
Total Areas of House (m <sup>2</sup> )	305.33 (463.36)	333.83 (517.62)	277.25 (401.95)	0.004
House ≥200 m <sup>2</sup>	48.24	51.00	45.55	<0.001
Material Ownerships (# of items)	6.78 (2.86)	6.85 (2.83)	6.70 (2.89)	0.057



**52.78%** of men own residential land or house, compared to **21.29%** of women.

## PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

In the survey, a list of valuable family asset were provided and respondent were asked if she or he owned them, such as savings book/savings account of 1 million VND or more, stock, cars, motorbike, and other valuable transportation and production means such as car, tractor, motorboat, etc. Data from the survey indicated that the most common asset

among respondents was a motorbike (consists of 50.78% of respondents), and savings book/account (11.22%). A small proportion of respondents owned production facility (7.38%) or other valuable asset (6.72%). Regarding other assets such as stock, or car, tractor, or boat, the proportions of respondents who owned them was very low.

**Table 2.6: Properties owned by men and women (% respondents)**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Saving account/bank account	11.22	11.57	10.87
Stock	0.42	0.68	0.15
Production facilities	7.38	7.81	6.95
Motorbike	50.78	72.2	29.87
Car	0.97	1.72	0.23
Tractor	2.07	3.77	0.4
Motorboat/boat	0.57	0.92	0.23
Other asset	6.72	6.84	6.59

It is noteworthy that the men had higher rates of ownership of all asset types as compared with women. For example, there are 72.2% of men who own motorbikes, which is more than double of women (29.87%). Regarding other assets, although the proportions of men who own a savings book/account or production facilities is higher than that of women, the gap is rather small (proportion of savings account and production facilities owned by men is 11.57% and 7.81% compared to 10.87% and 6.95% of women respectively).

There is also another valuable asset which is

house/or residential land. To this kind of property individual ownership and co-ownership are classified according to whether respondents are the sole owner or they share property with others. And data of the survey indicate more than 50 percent of men report that they own residential land or house. This proportion is double the proportion of women who report owing house (52.78% of men compared to 21.29% women). Meanwhile, proportion of women who do not own any house is 45.96 percent which is substantially higher than that of men (25.98%). Just over one third of women reported co-ownership.

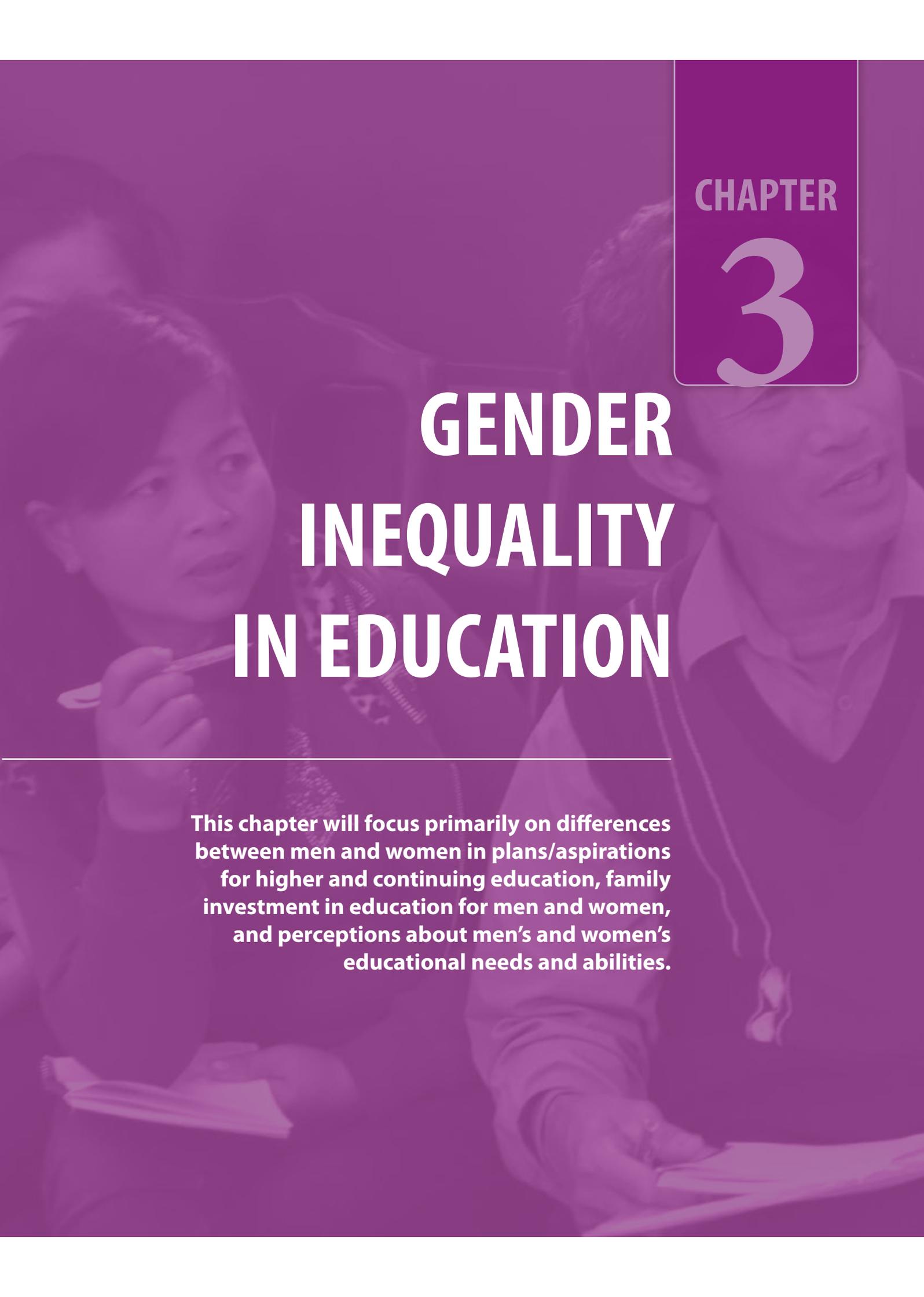
**Table 2.7: Residential land/house ownership by men and women (% respondents)**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Sole ownership	36.85	52.78	21.29
Co-ownership	27.06	21.23	32.75
Do not own	36.09	25.98	45.96

Ownership or co-ownership of the family property such as residential land is one of crucial factors which play an important role in balancing the power relations and bargaining power between sexes in the family, as this factor reflects the women's control and accessibility to family resource. Having

in ownership/ co-ownership can reinforce women's engagement and capacity to make a decision in the process of discussion/negotiation family matters between women and men in the family, especially related to property rights. It also influences women's access to other such as credit.





CHAPTER

# 3

# GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

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**This chapter will focus primarily on differences between men and women in plans/aspirations for higher and continuing education, family investment in education for men and women, and perceptions about men's and women's educational needs and abilities.**

## EDUCATION PLANS/ASPIRATIONS

About 7.67% of the surveyed population plans to continue their education to a higher level. Men (8.19%) were more likely to report a plan to continue their education than women (7.17%). Among those who reported planning to pursue higher levels of education, there is almost no difference between men and women who expect to attain post-graduate degrees (23.13% and 22.63% respectively).

## REASONS FOR NOT CONTINUALLY ATTENDING SCHOOL

Just over ninety-two percent of the participants reported that they had not continually attended school. Table 3.1 indicates the reasons for

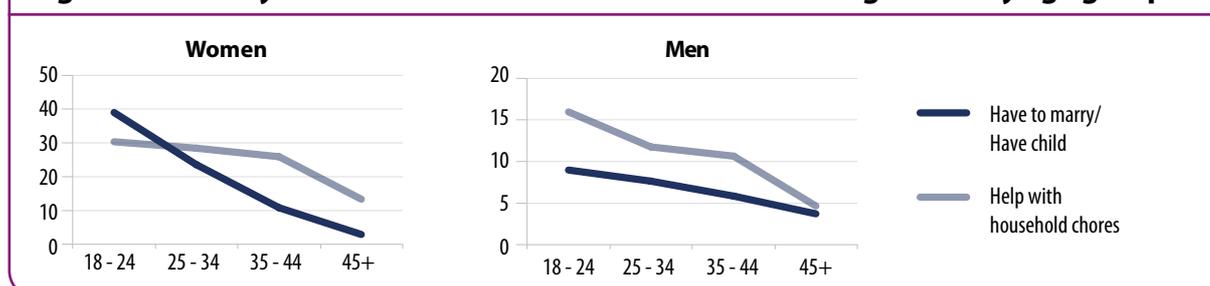
discontinuing or taking breaks from education. The top three reasons from gender perspectives included: having to work (32.57%), difficult economic conditions (18.88%), having to help with household chores (13.49%), having to marry/having child (7.45%).

The distributions of the reasons for not being able to continually pursue higher education differed between genders ( $p < 0.001$ ). Men (36.02%) were more likely than women (29.25%) to report having to work or earn money. However, women (20.09%) were more likely to report financial difficulties as a reason for their not pursuing higher education when compared to men (17.63%). Women (19.48%) were also more likely than men (7.28%) to report having to help with household chores. See Table 3.1 for summaries.

As shown in Figure 3.1, in general women

**Table 3.1: Reasons for not continually attending school**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. Have to work/have to earn money	32.57	36.02	29.25
2. Difficult economic conditions	18.88	17.63	20.09
3. Have to help with household chores	13.49	7.28	19.48
4. Have learned enough, as self-expected	13.67	13.72	13.62
5. Limited learning capacity	11.27	10.95	11.58
6. Have to marry/Have child	7.45	5.06	9.75
7. Health reasons	7.21	7.5	6.93
8. Discouragement from family	0.93	0.78	1.08
9. Disability	0.9	1.04	0.76
10. Remote from home/without school	0.052	0.76	0.29
11. Having no facilitating conditions	0.33	0.46	0.2
12. Aged	53.71	53.75	53.66
13. Others	3.21	3.53	2.9

**Figure 3.1: Family-related issues as reasons for not continuing school by age groups**

were more likely to discontinue education due to family related issues than men. The pattern within the age groups is different between men and women. Specifically, women at young age groups discontinue education more than men in the same cohorts.

### FAMILY INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

#### Most families pay equal attention to daughters' and sons' education

Nearly seventy-eight percent of survey respondents reported that their parents paid the same attention to their education, disregarding their gender. Only 4.13% reported that their parents paid more attention to a son's education when compared to a daughter's, and 1.12% of them reported that their parents paid more attention to the

daughter's education when compared to the son's. Additionally, 4.66% of participants reported that their parents did not care about their education. Furthermore, the distribution of family investment in children's education differed between genders ( $p < 0.05$ ). Women (4.73%) are more likely to report differences in educational priority based on gender when compared to men (3.52%). See Table 3.2.

This trend is true in different age, educational, regional, ethnic and income groups. This is a positive sign showing a more equal trend in educational opportunities for boys and girls.

Qualitative research found the same tendency for young cohorts at the age of 40 or younger. The sacrifice of a daughter's education in favor of a son's education was more likely to have happened among people aged 40 or above. Still, in certain poor families, a son's education is placed above a daughter's education.

**Table 3.2: Family investments in children's education (%)**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. More attention to son's education	4.13	3.52	4.73
2. More attention to daughter's education	1.12	1.11	1.12
3. No difference between son's and daughter's education	77.87	76.64	79.07
4. Family doesn't care	4.66	4.62	4.70

### Box 3.1: “I am happy that can I help his dream come true”

*When I was in 9th grade, my father was sick and we had to spend a lot of money on his treatment. My family then fell deeply into debt. My mother had to sell our land and other things to pay back the debt. We fell into a miserable situation. My parents were desperate. I discontinued my studies after 9th grade and went to work as a domestic helper in Hanoi. Each month I sent home two million dong for my parents. I wanted my big brother to continue his high school education. Anyway, he does better than me in his studies. I'd rather he complete his studies. He is now studying in a technical college. I am happy that I can help his dream come true. (Female, 20 years old, Hanoi).*

*Basically, my family's economic situation was difficult. I wanted to study but I thought it would cost my parents a lot of money while they were facing difficulties, so I wanted to help my family at that point and invest in my younger sibling. (Female, 26 years old, Long An).*

*Nowadays most families do not differentiate between a son and a daughter. They want their children, regardless of their sex, to obtain a high education. However, I notice that in poor families in my community girls often leave school earlier than boys. Parents choose to invest more in their son. They think girls will get married soon after they reach the age of 18 or 20. With limited resources, parents think they have to prioritize their son. (Male, 45 years old, Ha Noi).*

## GENDER-BASED ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION

Nine statements reflecting common gender prejudice on women's and men's ability in education were introduced in the questionnaire. Respondents were requested to select one option among three levels of attitudes: agree, partly agree or disagree with each statement.

As shown in the Table 3.3, almost 30% of respondents agreed with the assertion that men are better at learning than women. This number climbed to nearly two thirds (65.56%) when participants were asked about abilities in the natural sciences and engineering. Conversely, more than two thirds (68.95%) thought that women's abilities in the social sciences and humanities were better than men's. Close to one third of the participants (30.92%) agreed that women should only study to a certain level in order to save time for family. Approximately 40% agreed that men often do not want to love

or marry women who have a higher education than they themselves have. Over one fourth of participants (29.08%) agreed that a family is often unhappy if the wife has a higher level of education than her husband. Nearly one fifth of participants (19.78%) agreed that a son should have priority access to education when a family has limited financial resources. Moreover, 87.75% of the participants agreed that men should continue to attain education at the highest level possible, whereas only 66.57% agreed that women should continue pursuing education at the highest level possible. Although women tended to have more positive attitudes towards men pursuing a higher level of education, the data also indicated that men (69.2%) are more likely than women (62.54%) to agree that women should continue to access higher levels of education ( $p < 0.05$ ). See Table 3.3 for summaries.

**Table 3.3: Gender-based attitudes on women's and men's education (%)**

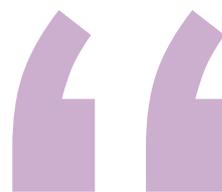
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Partly agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
1 Men often study better than women	29.39	27.00	43.61
2 Men are often better than women in studying natural sciences or engineering	65.56	21.88	12.56
3 Women are often better than men in studying social sciences and humanities	68.95	21.01	10.04
4 Men should continue to study to attain a high a level as possible	87.75	10.62	1.64
5 Women should continue to study to attain a high a level as possible	66.57	26.82	6.60
6 Men often don't want to love/marry women who have higher education than themselves	39.10	28.66	32.23
7 A family is often unhappy if the wife has higher education than the husband	29.08	33.57	37.34
8 In a family with limited finance, then priority should be given to sons' education	19.78	12.03	68.19
9 Women should study only to a certain level in order to save time for building a family	30.92	30.09	38.99

### Women hold a stronger prejudice with regard to women's education than men

For analysis, the scoring on a Likert scale was used as follows: 0 for Disagree, 1 for Partly Agree and 2 for Agree. The mean was then calculated for each statement. The higher the mean the more a person agrees with the statement. In other words, the higher the mean the more gender prejudice the person holds. (See table 3.4).

As presented in the Table 3.4 women and men reported significantly different attitudes and perceptions towards gender in education. Women are more likely than men to agree with the following statements: "men often study better than women", "men are often better than women in natural sciences", "women are often better than men in social sciences", "women should study only to a certain level in order to save time for building a family", "men often don't love or marry women

who have a higher education than themselves", and "a family is often unhappy if the wife has a higher education than her husband."



Men often don't love or marry women **who have a higher education than themselves.**"

**Table 3.4: Attitudes towards education of men and women by sex**

	All	Men	Women	p
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
1. Men often study better than women	0.84 (0.82)	0.92 (0.84)	0.77 (0.80)	<0.000
2. Men are often better than women in studying natural sciences or engineering	1.54 (0.69)	1.57 (0.67)	1.52 (0.71)	0.024
3. Women are often better than men in studying social sciences and humanities	0.40 (0.64)	0.38 (0.62)	0.42 (0.67)	0.006
4. Men should continue to study to attain as high level as possible	0.16 (0.41)	0.15 (0.40)	0.16 (0.42)	0.118
5. Women should continue to study to attain as high level as possible	1.59 (0.61)	1.57 (0.62)	1.61 (0.60)	0.003
6. Men often don't want to love/marry women who have a higher education than themselves	1.08 (0.82)	1.17 (0.80)	1.00 (0.83)	<0.000
7. A family is often unhappy if the wife has a higher education than the husband	0.94 (0.79)	1.01 (0.79)	0.87 (0.79)	<0.000
8. In a family with limited resources, then priority should be given to sons' education	0.52 (0.79)	0.54 (0.80)	0.50 (0.78)	0.012
9. Women should study only to a certain level in order to save time for building a family	0.94 (0.83)	0.99 (0.83)	0.88 (0.83)	<0.000

In the next step, a total value of scores for all nine statements and a median were calculated to identify a cutting point. Those whose total scores were within 0 to the median will fall into the Less Prejudice group, the other half with total scores within the range of the median and above will fall into the group of Prejudice.

According to the results, there are more people in the Less Prejudice group than in the Prejudice group. Specifically, 58.81 percent belong to the Less Prejudice group compared to the 41.19 percent that belong to the Prejudice group. It's worth noting that more women than men hold prejudice against women's education (45.3% versus 36.97%).

### **The younger a person is the less prejudice he/she holds**

Women still make up a bigger proportion among the Prejudice group aged 18–24. Nevertheless, the ratio of women in the Less Prejudice group aged 1–24 is not too far behind that of men in the same group. In other words, there is a clear tendency which shows that the younger a woman is the less prejudice she holds in regards to a woman's ability in education. Men share the same tendency but the change is not as visible as that of women. See table 3.5 for details.



People talk about a woman’s higher education or social status **as a potential threat** to the family’s stability and happiness.

**Table 3.5: Women and Men in group Prejudice and Less Prejudice by age (%)**

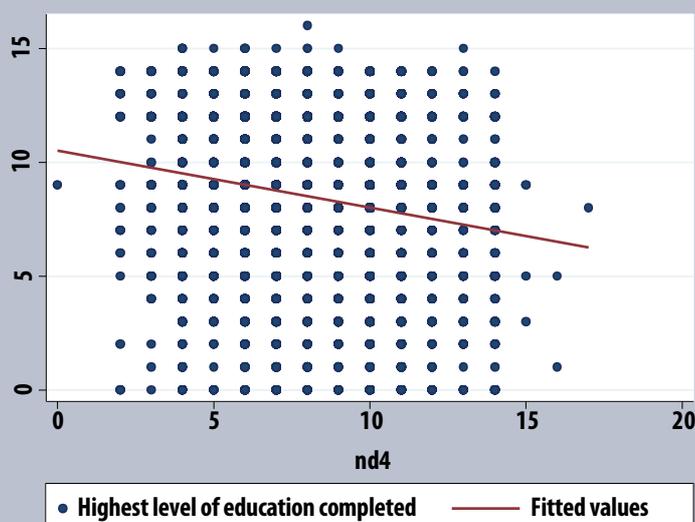
	Men				Women			
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45+	18-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Less Prejudice	67.87	59.78	51.79	52.04	69.57	69.82	62.03	59.84
Prejudice	32.13	40.22	48.21	47.96	30.43	30.18	37.97	40.16

**Education has a positive influence on the gender attitudes of men and women**

Using the correlation checking method, the correlation line of highest completed educational level and the point value of statements (explained above) goes down. This means that the higher the educational level is the lower scores, which means less prejudice. This correlation is statistically significant (pair - wise correlation test) though not too strong (r spearman= -0.18).

Qualitative research supports the survey findings and helps provide a better understanding of the reason behind the prejudices towards the education of women. In the traditional gender hierarchy within a couple, the husband’s position should be higher than that of his wife. This is seen as “natural” or “normal” and people believe that type of hierarchy is necessary for a stable and happy family. Such a perception sets a norm or criteria for men and for women in mate selection and later on regulates the power relationship between the couple. People talk about a woman’s higher education or social status as a potential threat to the family’s stability and happiness. Deep down, women’s higher education or social status threatens men’s supreme position in the family. Unless it is changed, this perception will continue to be a main barrier for women to close the gender gaps not only with regards to education but also areas such as professional career development and political leadership.

In the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, regardless of education level, place of residence or social status and other social background variables, men and women share the thought that a woman’s higher education can be a disadvantage for her when it comes to getting married or keeping their family happy. Box 3.2 presents a summary of testimonies by men and women from the research sites.



### **Box 3.2: A smart wife should always keep herself lower than her husband**

*There is a couple in my department. The wife has a higher degree and is more capable than her husband. That is why she has been promoted to be the head of the department. But this upsets her husband and since then her family has been unhappy. After a while, she resigned and her husband became the head. Everything got well then. She said, 'I would rather lose gender equality than see my family broken.' Thus a smart wife should always keep herself lower than her husband.*

(Female focus group discussion, Ho Chi Minh City).

*Wives having a higher education than their husbands? No, it is not a good idea. It's unusual. First, when the man is about to get married, he has never dated a girl who has had a higher education than himself. Second, after getting married, if the wife, for some reason, improved education, although the man might accept her to pursue her education, he is never truly happy with this. People around will mock him for this. He will feel his position threatened.* (Male, 51, Ha Noi)

*Men hesitate to marry women with a higher education than themselves. It's like they don't dare to date the women (...) No one dares to date the high school female teachers here so they don't have husbands.* (Male, 44 years old, Long An)

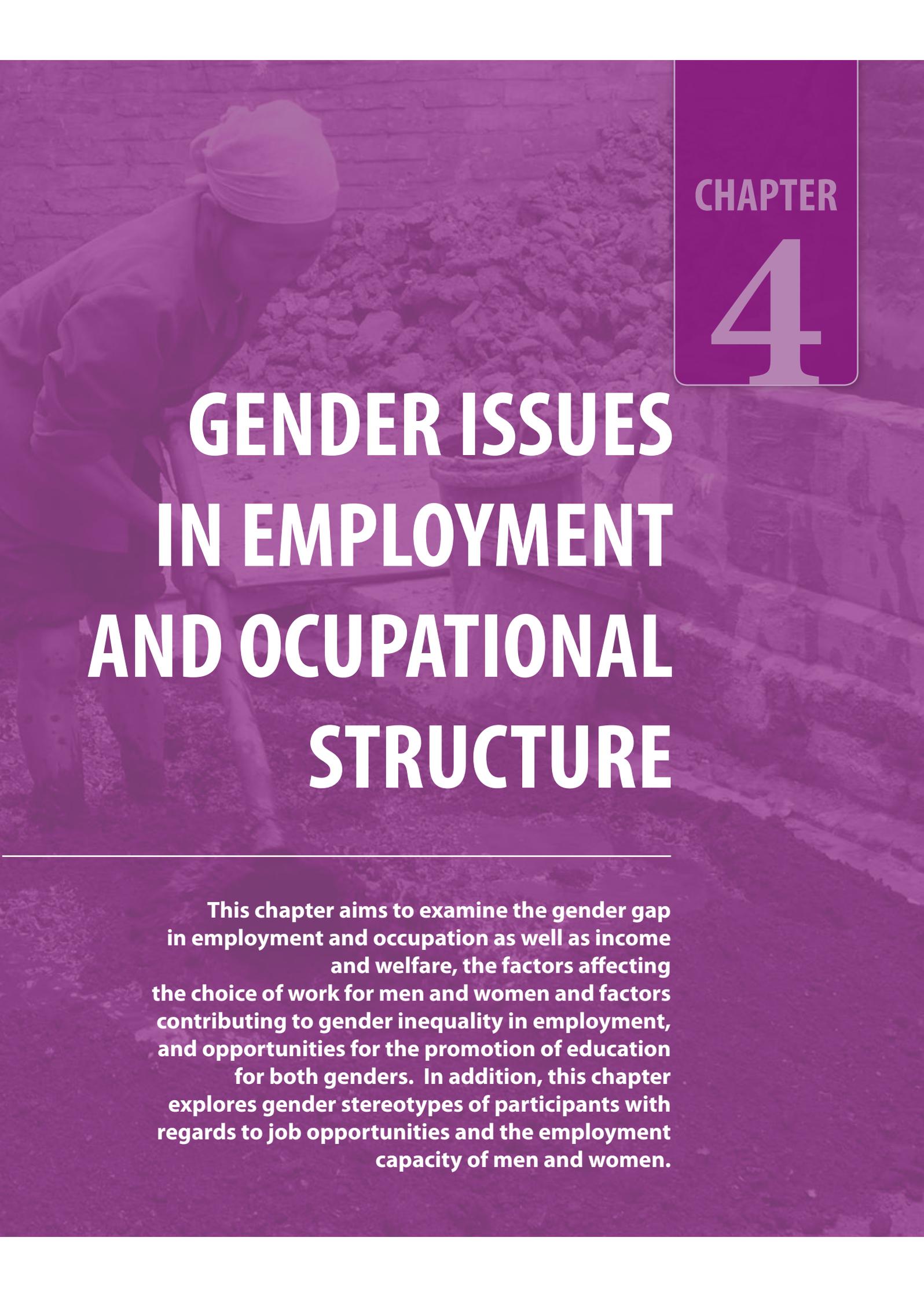
*Families where the wife has a higher education than the husband face more difficulties. The men often get offended. When we speak up they don't want to understand, they think we want to control them. This will undermine the family's happiness."* (Female focus group discussion, Long An)

*At the moment my girlfriend is studying for her master's degree. I think it's a bit unequal in terms of educational levels between us. Firstly, I can't really share with her. Secondly, regarding social status, I lose. So I think it is a must for me to be equal or higher than my wife (...) In my opinion most women with a high education find it difficult to get married.* (Male, 30 years old, Ho Chi Minh City)

To conclude, although the gap does not seem large, gender inequality in education still exists in Vietnam. More women compared to men lack education. However, this has been changing gradually, young women nowadays have more education opportunities. Boys and girls are receiving more equal education investments from their families.

Generally speaking, more men plan to study higher than women. Women, more than men, often face barriers to continue their studies because of reasons related to family issues, issues such as having to marry, having children or helping with household chores.

Prejudice regarding women's education is still widespread. Women are perceived as less capable than men in education in general, not as good as men in natural sciences. More importantly, women's higher education is perceived as a threat to their marriage and marital relationship. This implies that women should place their family above their education. More women than men hold gender prejudice with regard to women's education. Yet changes are taking place in people's perception – the younger the person is and the higher the education he or she has, the less prejudice he or she holds.

A woman wearing a headscarf and a long-sleeved shirt is working on a brick wall. She is leaning over a wooden plank, possibly measuring or laying bricks. The background shows a large pile of bricks and a partially completed brick wall. The entire image has a purple tint.

CHAPTER

# 4

# GENDER ISSUES IN EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

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**This chapter aims to examine the gender gap in employment and occupation as well as income and welfare, the factors affecting the choice of work for men and women and factors contributing to gender inequality in employment, and opportunities for the promotion of education for both genders. In addition, this chapter explores gender stereotypes of participants with regards to job opportunities and the employment capacity of men and women.**

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN OCCUPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

**Although the proportion of women who are currently working is relatively high, women are mainly self-employed, hold informal jobs and/or unstable work.**

Vietnam is a country that has a high proportion of women engaged in the labor market<sup>1</sup>. In this survey 79.34% of women compared to 85.73% of men reported that they are working. This proportion is consistent with the national statistics on employment rate (73.1% women versus 82.3% men in 2013<sup>2</sup>). However, a difference is clearly observed when it comes to occupational structure, as well as income and the opportunity for promotion between the two genders.

Regarding occupations, among the more common occupations that men and women have, there is a higher proportion of men compared

to women working in construction, self-services and manual labor. However, women comprise a higher proportion in agriculture/forestry/fishery, education, training and small business.

The proportion of women working in agriculture/forestry/fishery is significantly higher than that of men (53.29% of women compared to 48.82% of men). Similarly, there are over 25% of women doing manual labor jobs or self-services compared to 19.73% of men. Women living in urban areas and doing manual work/self-services or small business consist of a higher proportion compared to that of men in urban areas (40.67% of women compared to 28.73% of men) and compared to that of women living in rural areas (40.67% of urban women compared to 18.15% of rural women). See more in Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Occupations by urban - rural area (%)**

	Rural		Urban	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Management & qualified professions	7.95	5.01	20.00	17.98
Workers	15.35	7.47	31.44	24.8
Agriculture, forestry, fishery	60.64	69.38	19.82	16.55
Manual labor, self-services	16.07	18.15	28.73	40.67

<sup>1</sup> ILO & NavigoSearch. "Gender equality in practice of recruitment and promotion in Vietnam – Policy Brief". March, 2014.

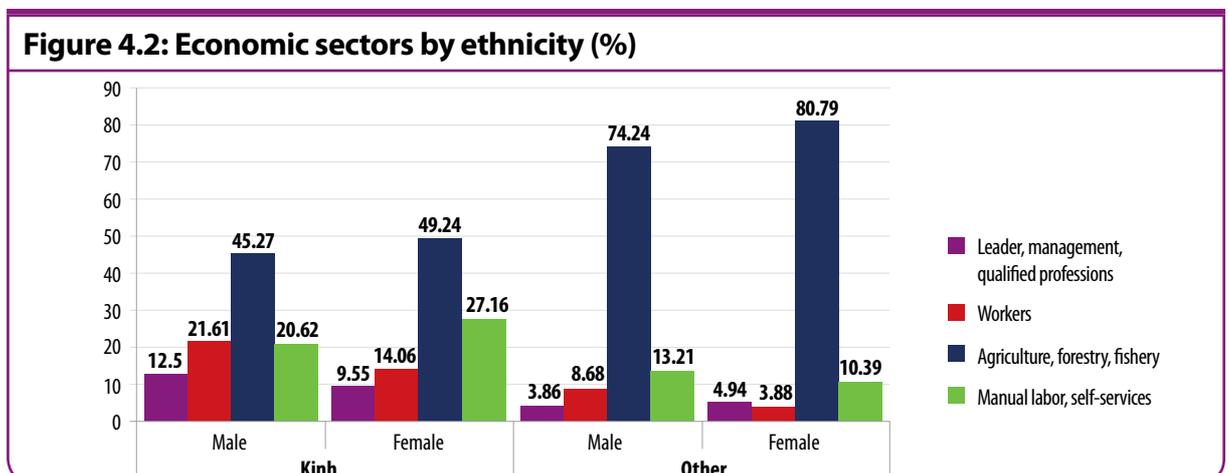
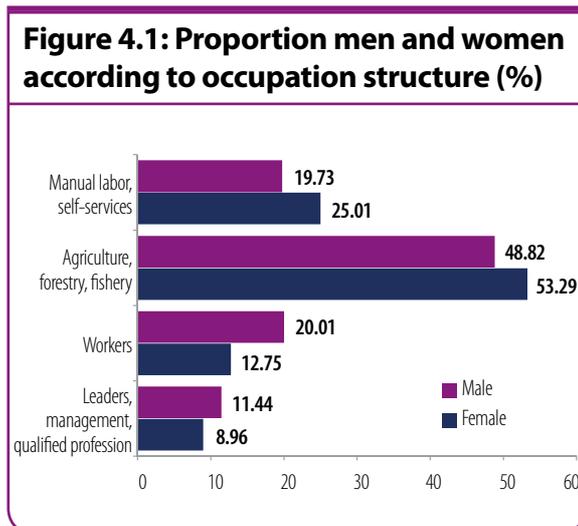
<sup>2</sup> GSO. "Labor and Employment Survey Q4.2014".



The proportion of women working in agriculture is **significantly higher** than that of men.

In turn, the proportion of men working as workers or technicians is significantly higher than that of women (20.01% of men compared to 12.75% of women). Also, the proportion of men working in the areas of management or other qualified professions is higher than those of women in both rural or in urban areas (11.44% of men compared to 8.96% of women according to Figure 4.1).

Regarding ethnicity, it is clear that the proportion of men and women of minority ethnicities is concentrated in agriculture/forestry/fishery activities (consisting of 72.24% of men and 80.79% of women). So far, the proportion of ethnic minority men and women working in other economic sectors is considerably low compared to those of Kinh men and women. Also, it is worthy to note that proportions of ethnic minority women engaging in other economic sectors such as workers or service business are much lower than those of the Kinh women. For example, in Figure 4.2 below, the proportion of ethnic minority female workers is three times lower than that of the Kinh women (3.88% of ethnic minority women compared to 14.06% of Kinh women). The proportion of ethnic minority women working in management or qualified professions is about half of that of the Kinh women (4.94% compared to 9.55%). However, this proportion is slightly higher than that of ethnic minority men (4.94% of ethnic minority women compared to 3.86% of ethnic minority men). It probably reflects the efforts of programs and policies targeted at ethnic minority women.



## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MANAGEMENT

### Women manage a smaller number of staff while men take charge of a larger number of staff.

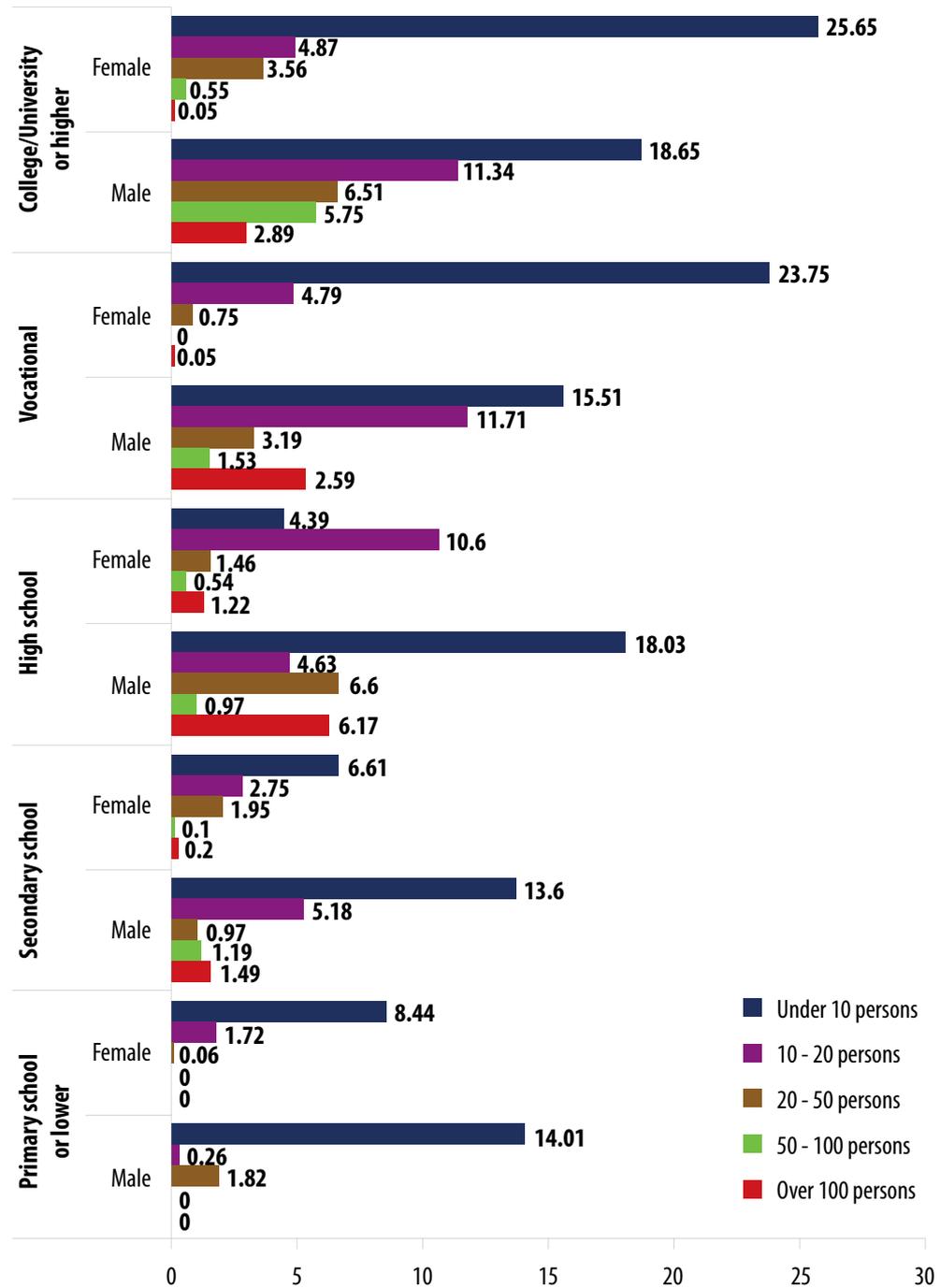
Differences can be seen regarding the management positions that men and women participants are currently occupying. About 1/3 of the survey participants are working in a certain management position and it can be observed that there is a small proportion of men and women who report managing a larger size of staff (from 50 persons and over). However, men make up a significantly higher proportion compared to that of women – 5.66% of men compared to only 0.62% of women (see Table 4.2). Similarly, there is a higher percentage (4.18 %) of men who are in charge of staff of 20 to 50 people compared to only 1.77% of women participants. The majority of women are mainly in charge of smaller staff

sizes (under 10 persons) while a significantly higher number of men are in charge of staff sizes of more than 10 persons.

Looking at gender differences from an educational perspective, the gap remains. At the same educational level, more men than women are still in charge of larger numbers of staff. Even in the group of college/university or higher, women do not get the same management promotions as men do. Specifically, in the educational group of college/university or higher, there are 11.34% of men reported to be in charge of 10 to 20 staff while this proportion of women for the same group is only 4.87%; and the proportion of men reported to be in charge of 50 to 100 staff or over 100 staff is 5.75% and 2.89% respectively compared to less than that of one percent of women managing the same staff size (see Figure 4.3).

**Table 4.2: Size of staff managed, by gender (%)**

	All	Men	Women
100 persons and over	2.43	3.87	0.36
50-100 persons	1.16	1.79	0.26
20-50 persons	3.19	4.18	1.77
10-20 persons	6.18	6.70	5.43
Under 10 persons	15.40	16.24	14.18
No one	71.64	67.22	78.00

**Figure 4.3: Size of staff managed, by education**

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CHOICES OF OCCUPATION AND JOBS

### Reasons for choosing a certain occupation

**Women aged 25 and older tend to choose employment which is close to home, and which gives them more time for family.**

The most common reasons for women to choose their job are: work appropriateness, no other work choice, workplace is close to home, good income, work is within their family's business and the job allows for more time with family.

There is a difference in the choice of employment between age groups. Participants in the age group of 18-24 choose jobs based on their own interests or its appropriateness based on their work capacity. On the other hand, participants in the age groups from 25 to 44 choose jobs which are located close to home and which give them more time with family. This is perhaps due to the fact that women in those age groups are involved in childbearing and have to consider balancing their time between work and family. It can be said

that family is a strong factor that limits women's geographical mobility and the time available for better job positions compared to men of similar age groups. In contrast, for men, choosing a stable job is much of what drives their selection.

Men aged 45 and older tend to choose jobs because they are assigned to them by their organizations, they have no other choice, or because it is within an existing family's business. Participants of younger age groups tend to make choices for jobs based on their stability and salary.

Data in Table 4.3 indicates that the proportion of women who stated having chosen their work because it allows for time flexibility in order to take care of their family is much higher compared to the proportion of men choosing the same occupational area, including those who work in management and qualified professions.

It can be said that the traditional gender norm of the double role of women is deeply rooted in people's

### Box 4.1: Women should work close to home in order to better care for their children and family

*Women should work close to home because a woman's innate task is to take care of the family, of parents and of children. My view is that women should work close to home so that it is convenient for her to take care of the family. It does not matter if her job brings her a high or low income, the important thing is that she can travel conveniently from house to workplace so she can take care of her family. Good or bad income depends also on qualification/capacity of the woman or the man. In short, women should only work close to home. (Male, 24 years old, Hanoi)*

*A woman has a small kid and she is working far from home, this should only happen if she has no other choice. No one would prefer that job. Only if their life is difficult or they cannot find a suitable job in their residential area should they go far to work. (Female, 24 years old, Hanoi)*

**Table 4.3: Reasons for choosing current work by occupations (%)**

	All		Leader, management, qualified professions		Workers		Agriculture, forestry, fishery		Manual labor, self-services	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	Having more time for the family	3.88	10.47	1.59	8.2	2.72	8.45	3.27	7.52	7.88
Work place is close to home	10.96	14.03	6.22	8.74	11.81	21.5	10.05	11.39	15.1	17.75

thinking and awareness, especially among women, so that they take housework as their “heavenly granted tasks”. In in-depth interviews with men and women participants at active working ages in Hà Nội and Hưng Yên, men reported not facing any difficulties in making choices about their place of work as long as the job gives reasonable income and meets their health and working capacity. However, women must consider balancing between paid work and family work. This reflects the common perception still existing today that women should be responsible for taking care of family work (housework, caring for children, etc.)

### Choice of occupation

In choosing occupation, it is worth noting that men and women in younger age groups share more equally in the work area of management and qualified professions –though the older they are, the bigger the gender differences (see Table 4.4).

Similarly, in these young age groups the proportion of women working jobs related to

agriculture/forestry/fishery, manual labor or self-business are lower than those in other age groups. The proportion of young men and women who work as workers differ little compared to those of men and women in other older age groups. This indicates that there is more equality in the engagement of men and women in the labor market among younger generations.

### Women take on informal jobs such as manual labor, self-employment or jobs in the agricultural sphere.

According to the survey data, there is a considerable number of participants who report working for their families or being self-employed (65.73%) in which the proportion of women who work in this economic sector is higher than that of men (69.75% of women compared to 61.68% of men). Meanwhile, men make up a higher proportion compared to that of women in the state/collective sector or in the local or foreign private sector (see Table 4.5 next page).

**Table 4.4: Occupation by age groups (%)**

	All		18-24		25-34		35-44		45+	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	Management and qualified professions	11.44	8.96	6.08	5.68	13.81	14.21	6.39	6.19	13.91
Workers	20.01	12.76	30.05	34.33	26.19	19.46	19.44	9.33	16.72	9.33
Agriculture, forestry, fishery	48.82	53.31	35.47	37.48	41.03	36.33	47.99	55.02	53.88	60.48
Manual labor, self-services	19.73	24.97	28.4	22.5	18.97	30.00	26.18	29.45	15.5	21.29

**Table 4.5: Economic sectors (%)**

	All	Men	Women
State/collective	13.20	12.18	14.22
Private (local/foreign)	21.07	18.07	24.09
Work for family/self	65.73	69.75	61.68

Table 4.6 below indicates a clear gender difference: men make up a higher proportion in the state and private sectors, in management and qualified professions, and workers.

Women on the other hand concentrate in the area of agriculture/forestry/fishery, or in manual labor and self-services (work for family/self-services or non-profit), all of which are riskier jobs, suffer from low productivity, and are associated with unstable and lower income<sup>3</sup>.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CONDITIONS FOR RECRUITMENT

**A majority of men have to make a commitment not to get involved in social vices, while women should make a commitment not to bear a child within the trial period or the first two years of work.**

About 23.6% of respondents who stated that they had to make commitments with their employers. It is worth noting that men tend to make commitments not to engage in social vices more than women (34.57% and 20.87%, respectively) while 7.83% of women and 1.68% of men have to commit “not to give birth” during the work trial period or within the first two years of work. A significant proportion of both men and women also have to accept any work assignment made by their employers (76% of women and 81.95% of men). See Table 4.7.

**Table 4.6: Occupation by economic sector**

	State/collective		Work in foreign/ local private sector		Self-employment	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Management, qualified professions	64.33	60.64	8.39	7.3	0.53	0.36
Workers	35.45	38.73	41.17	30.76	8.22	3.54
Agriculture, forestry, fishery	0	0	15.26	25.2	73.08	69.87
Manual labor	0.22	0.63	35.18	36.74	18.17	26.23

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. “Gender Assessment in Vietnam”. Hanoi, 2011. Pp.47-81.

**Table 4.7: Commitments of employers**

	All	Men	Women
Not to give birth within one or two years	4.28	1.68	7.83
Not to request for accommodation	2.66	2.76	2.52
Not to engage in social vices	28.79	34.57	20.87
To unconditionally accept any work assignment made by the organization/company	79.50	81.95	76.15
Other commitments	17.47	16.56	18.72

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ENJOYING BENEFITS PROVIDED DURING EMPLOYMENT

### Gender differences in social insurance

**Proportions of participants joining a social insurance scheme, especially women working in agriculture/forestry/fishery or manual labor, and/or self-services, are very low.**

Social insurance is a long-term investment for social security beyond the working ages. Government policies have recently been reviewed and revised in order to improve social protection and security to laborers when they pass from active working age to retirement. The social insurance system has been applied compulsorily to employees working not only in state sectors but also in private ones. The voluntary insurance scheme is applied to laborers who work without a contract or with short-term contracts, or for farmers and self-employed laborers, etc.

However, data from the survey indicates that in the sphere of self-employment or the informal sector, both men and women engage in social insurance at a very low level. The proportion of participants who had social insurance at the

time of the survey was rather low –only about 1/5 of them acquire social insurance (19.21%), where the proportion of women having social insurance is only 18.23%, which is lower than that of men (20.17%).

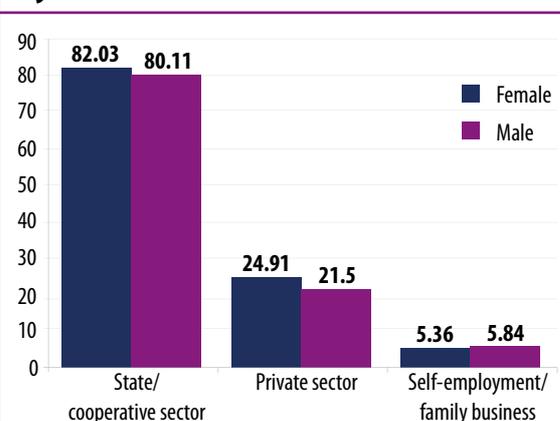
Social insurance is usually bought by employers for employees. Figure 4.4 indicates that there are over 80% of both men and women working in state sectors who report that they have social insurance, while there are only about 25% of women and 21.5% of men working in the private sector who have social insurance. The proportion of men and women working informal jobs or self-employed who have social insurance is very low (5.36% of women and 5.84% of men, respectively).

In general, the proportion of males who have social insurance is slightly higher than that of women. This is partly due to the fact that women

### Box 4.2: Women working in informal jobs are disadvantaged in social welfare

*I'm working in agriculture, so there is no social scheme or program that benefits me.*  
(Female, 55 years old, Hung Yen)

**Figure 4.4: Social insurance by economic sector**



work in agricultural areas, are self-employed, hold informal jobs, or work in small business enterprises where social insurance is mostly absent. The media has continuously reported on the issues of social insurance avoidance on a large scale.

A substantial number of employers try to avoid buying social insurance for their employees, which in turn puts the workers in disadvantageous conditions<sup>4</sup>.

### Gender difference in medical insurance

**Women obtain medical insurance more than men do, however the proportion of those that have medical insurance is still low.**

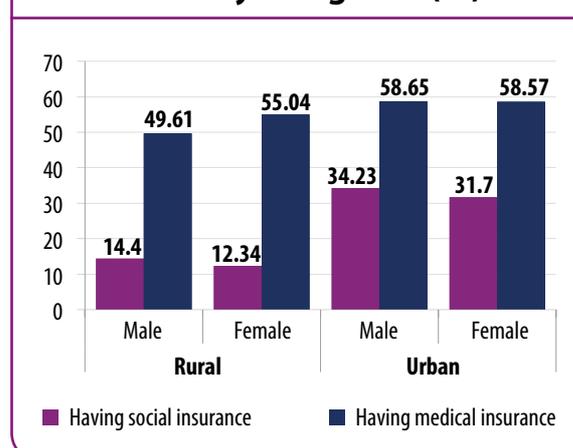
The proportion of those with medical insurance is higher than those with social insurance. However, the latter proportion consists of only more than half of participants (54.48%). There are slightly more women with medical insurance than men (56.11% and 52.19% respectively).

**Table 4.8: Medical insurance by gender**

	All	Men	Women
State/collective	93.29	92.90	93.62
Private (local/foreign)	48.48	49.60	47.64
Work for family/self	48.15	51.38	44.48

Regarding the economic sector, Table 4.8 indicates a very high proportion of people working in state sectors who receive medical insurance from their organizations (this proportion consists of over 90% of both men and women). In contrast, the proportion that has medical insurance is relatively low among participants who work in the informal sector and in agriculture, forestry, fishery or who live in rural areas. The proportion of women having medical insurance is slightly higher compared to that of men. This may be due to women being more aware of health care when it comes to themselves and their family members (see Figure 4.5).

**Figure 4.5: Medical and social insurances by living area (%)**



<sup>4</sup> “Công khai nợ bảo hiểm xã hội” (Openly in debt of Social insurance). Newspaper *Người Lao Động*, dated 4/11/2014. Source: <http://nld.com.vn/cong-doan/cong-khai-no-bhxh-20141124213305864.htm>; “50% doanh nghiệp đang trốn đóng bảo hiểm xã hội” (50% of enterprises avoid to pay social insurance). Newspaper *Dân trí*, dated 16/9/2015. Source: <http://dantri.com.vn/viec-lam/50-doanh-nghiep-dang-tron-dong-bao-hiem-xa-hoi-20150916081156034.htm>



### Gender differences in opportunities for employment and work promotion

**Women are more disadvantaged when compared to men in social and political promotion. However, the gender gap is reduced in younger age cohorts.**

In the survey there are questions concerning benefits and opportunities for promotion. Work benefits discussed in this section include those related to material benefit (wage increase); promotion opportunities (promotion to higher working positions); political opportunities (becoming a Party member); and opportunities for qualification (nomination for training).

In general, results of the survey indicate rather clear gender differences: men tend to get work promotions or join the Party and attend conferences/workshops more than women ( $p < 0,05$ ). Gender differences are also found across the age groups. It can be concluded that gender equality is reflected more in the younger age group

of 18-24 where women are recognized and are more equally engaged in employment along with men. Table 4.9 shows that the proportion of women in the age group of 18-24 who report promotions to a higher working position is almost double that of men in the same age group (7.98% of women compared to 3.89% of men), and the proportion of women in this younger age group who report attending trainings or workshops/conferences is considerably higher than that of men (16.75% and 5.28% of women, compared to 10.15% and 1.75% of men respectively) (see Table 4.9).

Men and women living in rural areas are at a disadvantage compared to men and women living in urban areas when it comes to opportunities for work promotion. Women, as usual, bear more disadvantages compared to men living in the same area. Table 4.10 indicates that rural women are about 4 times behind urban women in the wage increases over time. Rural women have the lowest proportions for all other opportunities during their employment period, as well.

**Table 4.9: Work promotion opportunities by age groups (%)**

	All		18-24		25-34		35-44		45+	
	Men	Women								
Wage increase over time	15.65	14.35	15.44	24.37	20.42	22.87	11.15	11.23	16.26	11.61
Promotion to higher position	5.16	2.87	3.89	7.98	5.64	2.82	4.01	2.35	5.76	2.5
Join the Party	5.68	3.08	1.30	0.40	4.37	5.21	3.84	1.83	7.70	3.28
Receiving training	17.36	15.59	10.15	16.75	23.48	17.2	15.41	13.18	17.08	16.05
Attend conference/workshops	3.73	2.46	1.75	5.28	5.41	5.27	2.65	1.39	3.93	1.64

**Table 4.10: Work promotion opportunities by living area (%)**

	Rural		Urban	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Wage increase over time	10.49	7.96	28.26	28.91
Promotion to higher position	3.35	1.79	9.61	5.33
Join the Party	5.06	1.86	7.21	5.85
Receiving training	17.25	16.18	17.6	14.2

Again, women of minority ethnic groups are more disadvantaged than Kinh women in regard to benefits and opportunities for work promotion (see Table 4.11).

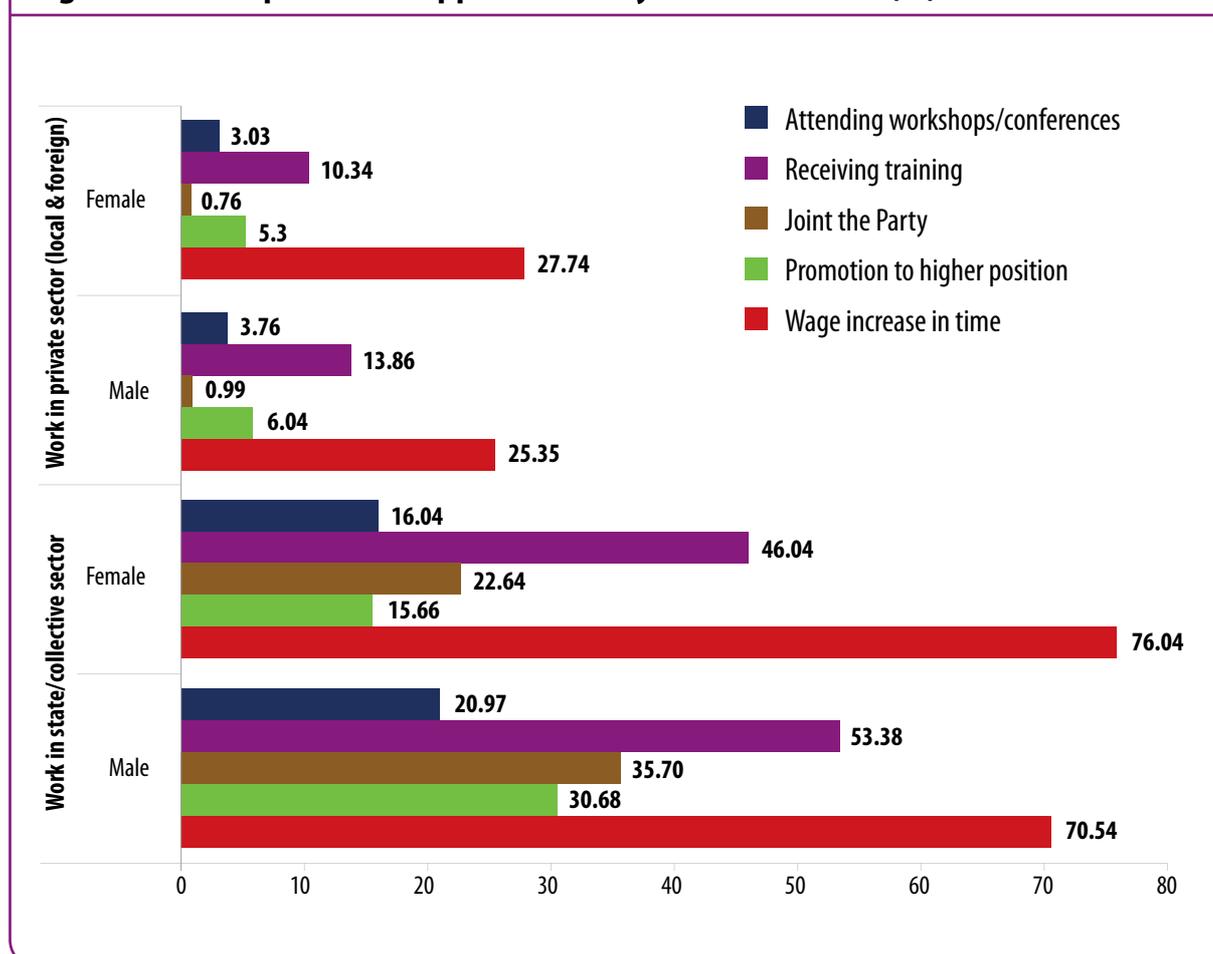
It is worth noting that the gender gap in work benefits mostly occurs in the state/collective sector. Figure 4.6 indicates that among the basic benefits mentioned in the survey for those working in the state/collective sector, receiving a wage increase over time is the only benefit where the proportion of women is slightly higher than that of men (76.04% of women compared to 70.54% of men). The gap between the two genders is most prominent in opportunity for

promotion to a higher work position (15.66% of women compared to 30.68% of men); and in opportunity for joining the Party (22.64% of women compared to 35.70% of men). In addition, women working in the state sector are more disadvantaged than men in opportunities for training (46.04% of women compared to 53.38% of men).

Meanwhile, for those who work in the private sector, the gender gap is less prominent than that in the state sector, although a similar gender inequality pattern is observed –men seem to have more chances of a work promotion, though not more chances of a wage increase over time.

**Table 4.11: Work promotion opportunities by ethnicity (%)**

	Kinh		Other ethnicity	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Wage increase over time	17.12	15.57	5.14	6.05
Promotion to higher position	5.7	3.11	1.29	1.23
Join the Party	6.23	3.43	1.78	0.66
Receiving training	16.08	14.86	26.49	20.5
Attending workshops/ conferences	4.13	2.72	0.84	0.68

**Figure 4.6: Work promotion opportunities by economic sector (%)**

### Gender difference in income

Although the income gap between the two genders is not big, the income of women is always lower than those of men regardless of the place of living (urban or rural), education level, ethnicity or area of occupation.

The total average income in a month of participants in the survey sample is approximately 3.782 million VND including both main occupation and extra jobs. The total average income of men per month (4,058,000 VND) is higher compared to that of women (3,491,000 VND) with statistical significance ( $p < 0.0001$ ). See Table 4.12 for average income by gender.

**Table 4.12: Average income by gender (VND)**

	All	Men	Women
Main occupation	3,340,913	3,522,206	3,149,826
Extra jobs	1,681,483	1,698,531	1,654,072
Main occupation and extra jobs	3,782,118	4,058,134	3,491,250

Regarding age groups, place of living (rural or urban), region, ethnicity (Kinh or other ethnic groups), or occupational area, the data of the survey indicates that the proportion of men in the highest income quintile is higher than those of women. Yet the proportions of women in the lowest income quintile is higher than that of men. This finding supports similar findings in other surveys on the income inequality between men and women.

Figure 4.7 compares the proportion of men and women in the lowest and highest income quintiles according to occupational area. It indicates a much higher proportion of women in the lowest quintile compared to those of men in the area of self-employment (41.7% of women compared to 11.57% of men) and in the private sector (23.04% of women compared to 6.47% of men) and in the state/collective

of women compared to 6.47% of men). Conversely, men make up a higher proportion of the highest income quintile compared to that of women.

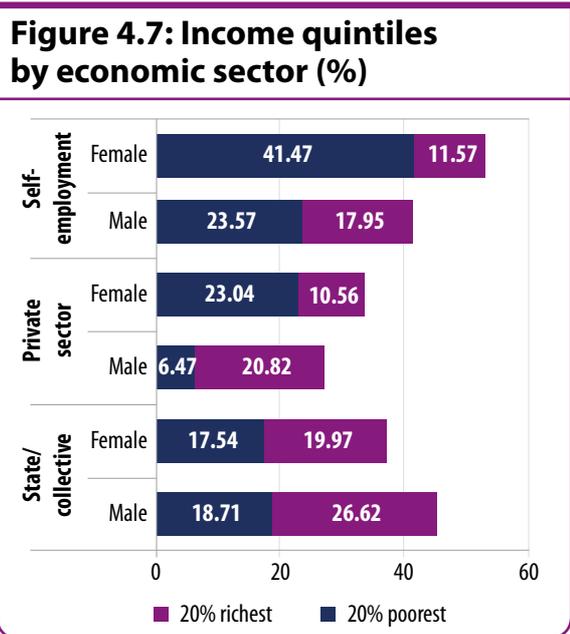
### GENDER ISSUES IN PEOPLE’S PERCEPTION OF WORKING CAPACITY AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

#### Perception of work capacity of men and women

**Both men and women still hold stereotypical gender attitudes but women tend to keep views of traditional gender norms so more than men do.**

Among factors that may influence men and women’s decision for employment and opportunities to work, traditional gender norms about men’s and women’s capacity to work and leadership/management abilities play a role.

Research on labor force participation has pointed out some of the socio-economic and development factors that may contribute to an increase in female labor force: the change in occupational structure with a shift to more service areas; technology advancement in home commodities which help to reduce time and labor spent on housework which is unpaid and is commonly considered a woman’s responsibility. Those factors create favorable conditions for women in terms of having more time and opportunities to engage in the labor market for paid work. In addition, basic factors such as education development and policies for gender equality together with policy and programs for improving





employment for women have mobilized women into the labor force to some extent, both in terms of the quantity and quality of the labor.

However, some research has pointed out gender stereotypes towards men and women's capacity or, in other words, traditional gender norms about men and women's roles and values are among the factors which lead to gender inequality in paid jobs.

In order to understand people's perception towards the working capacity of men and women, this survey provided a list of statements that reflect common gender stereotypes. Here are those of gender stereotypes regarding men and women's capacity to work: men in general work more effectively than women do; men do better than women in jobs that require more technical skills; men are better than women in management work; women tend to do work that requires patience and skills; workplaces with more women tend to have complicated problems, etc.

The participants' potential answers to each of the provided statements are: agree, partly agree and do not agree. Each answer is coded according to three values: 0, 1, and 2 (disagree, partly agree and agree, respectively). The mean

score is calculated – a higher score reflects a more stereotyped attitude.

According to the calculation of the mean scores which are illustrated in Table 4.13, it seems that stereotyped attitudes towards women's capacity to work are still strong, with all mean scores higher than the value of 1 in both men and women's groups. This reflects the current reality of female participation in the labor force as discussed in the above section, as well as in other reports on labor and employment in Vietnam.

Gender stereotypes which have the highest mean score are related to the perception that men are better than women at jobs requiring technical skills (1.81 mean score in the women's group and 1.76 in the men's group); and in the perception that women tend to do better with manual work that requires patience and skills (1.66 and 1.84 in the women's group and 1.62 and 1.84 in men's group, respectively). The perception that men are better than women in management receives a mean score of 1.32 in the female group and 1.23 in the male group. Similarly, men and women receive nearly the same score for the statement that men work more effectively than women do (1.24 in women's answers and 1.20 in men's ones).

It is worth noting that women turn out to have more gender-stereotyped attitudes than men do (see Table 4.13). It may be that women are still not confident in their own capacity. Another factor that explains this are the long-rooted gender norms held by society and people's perception. From early childhood, people are conditioned to believe that men work more effectively than women and women's work capabilities have not entered the public consciousness yet.

#### **Box 4.3: Working capacity of women are recognized in practice**

*Women are doing very well nowadays. I see that women are directors in many companies. We also have woman ministers in our country. (Man, 65 years old)*

**Table 4.13: Gender stereotypes toward working capacity**

	All	Men	Women	P
Men in general work more effectively than women do	1.22	1.20	1.24	0.0051
Men do better than women in jobs that require more technical skills	1.79	1.76	1.81	<0.0001
Men are normally better than women in management jobs	1.27	1.23	1.32	<0.0001
Women tend to do simple manual work	1.64	1.62	1.66	0.001
Women tend to do jobs that require patience and skills	1.82	1.80	1.84	0.0082
Workplaces with more women tend to have complicated problems	1.24	1.20	1.28	<0.0001

The results of the in-depth interviews with people also indicate clear gender stereotypes in people's thinking. For instance, to answer the question of who is a better leader, many participants shared that they think it is better for men to be leaders as women are "complicated".

It can be seen that there are gender stereotypes/gender norms about women and men's employment. If they are not addressed, although it may require a long time for change to take place, they will be reinforced and continue to trap women in informal jobs with low incomes.

In addition, the level of gender stereotyping can be

calculated in scores based on 9 provided stereotyped statements. The research team calculates the total score of the statements and takes the median score to identify the level of stereotyping on the working capacity of men and women from the respondents. The level of stereotyping calculated by the above method is then examined in relationship to the other demographic variables, such as age, education level, place of living and regions in order to see if the level of stereotype is influenced by those variables on men's and women's equality in employment.

Results illustrated in Table 4.14 show that the level of stereotyping is higher in older age groups.

**Box 4.4: Gender stereotypes: Men have leadership "traits" more than women do – men are decisive, open-minded and have broader views; women are complicated, narrow-minded and have shorter vision**

*Men are usually clear and quick. They are not so narrow-minded. Men have more of a sense of justice and women are more envious and prone to fighting compared to men. (Female, 60 years old, HCMC)*

*Male leaders may be more determined and decisive than females but in our society there are many female leaders who are very decisive and do very well. I mean it is fine for men or women to be leaders, but more men are good leaders because they have leadership traits. (Male, 29 years old, HCMC)*

*...a man always has a broader view than a woman does. There are women who do better than men, but men are always more decisive than women. (Female, 55 years old, Hung Yen)*

**Table 4.14: Gender stereotype toward working capacity by age groups (%)**

	All		18-24		25-34		35-44		45+	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Less stereotyped	53.6	45.6	68.55	71.83	58.64	54.35	56.45	40.72	47.52	40.19
Stereotyped	46.4	54.4	31.45	28.17	41.36	45.65	43.55	59.28	52.48	59.81

In the other words, younger generations seem to hold less prejudice towards women's employment, especially in the age group of 18-24.

The results of analyzing the relationship between the level of stereotyping among men and women according to the level of education are similar –the higher the educational level, the lower the level of stereotyping. Table 4.15 on next page indicates that, among those who have a stereotyped attitude, women who have a lower education (illiterate/under primary school, secondary school) make up a higher proportion than men do (62.99% women compared to 53.18% of men in illiterate/

under primary school; and 57.97% of women compared to 47.8% of men in primary/secondary school). Nevertheless, among those who still have stereotyped attitudes, the proportion of men is higher than that of women in the group of a higher level of education (31.46% of men compared to 26.7% of women in the group of college/university).

These findings indicate that education plays an important role in changing the traditional gender stereotyped perceptions, but education is not the sole factor. There are other factors that may contribute to reinforcing or maintaining those traditional gender norms about men and women's work.

#### **Box 4.5: Gender stereotype: Housework is a woman's inevitable duty**

*Men are leaders more often because it seems that they have more time, they do not have to spend so much time taking care of the family. Because women do all of the housework in the family, men have more time. (Female, 42 years old, Long An)*

*I think that to a woman, family and children are the most important because it is like a woman's "born task". It exists for a long time in our oriental people's mind. In general, at present time, for a woman, career and family should be parallel. (Male, 29 years old, HCMC)*

**Table 4.15: Gender stereotypes toward working capacity by level of education (%)**

	Primary school & lower		Secondary school		High school		Vocational training		College/ University higher	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Less stereotyped	46.82	37.01	52.2	42.03	56.77	56.76	56.19	52.44	68.54	73.83
Stereotyped	53.18	62.99	47.8	57.97	43.23	43.24	43.81	47.56	31.46	26.17

Regarding place of living, whether rural or urban or different regions, the results of the analysis indicate that the proportion of women with stereotyped attitudes is higher than that of men in all regions.

Table 4.16 shows that women living in the northern regions seem to hold more gender bias than those living in other regions (58.26% of Northern women compared to 52.66% of Central women and 51.96% of Southern women), while the proportion of men that stereotype are rather equal in all three regions (around 46%). It also indicates that rural women stereotype more compared to women living in urban areas (57.57% rural women compared to 47.25% urban women).

These findings are consistent with the findings of other sociological studies: people living in rural areas tend to preserve traditional norms more strongly than people living in urban areas.

### Perception of men and women's opportunities for employment

**Women seem to have more prejudiced views than men towards opportunities for employment and promotion.**

Similar to the above section on the perception on

the working capacity of men and women, certain gender-stereotyped statements were provided in order to explore respondents' perception on gendered employment opportunities. The common existing statements are: it is easier for men to get a job compared to women; men are often promoted more than women are; men often hold key positions in the workplace; men's income is often higher than women's income. The calculation of the score is the same as in the above section.

#### Box 4.6: Gender stereotype: Men are for career, women are for family

*In practice, men have more favorable conditions for education. But women, after they finish their schooling, think of getting a husband. Only some women who get jobs right after school have chances to further their education. In many other cases they get married if they do not find a job. And once married they have no time and less chances for more education. (Male, 49 years old, Hung Yen)*

**Table 4.16: Gender stereotypes toward working capacity by region and living area (%)**

	North		Central		South		Rural		Urban	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Less stereotyped	53.9	41.74	53.14	47.34	53.86	48.04	50.54	42.43	60.92	52.75
Stereotyped	46.1	58.26	46.86	52.66	46.14	51.96	49.46	57.57	39.08	47.25

**Table 4.17: Gender stereotypes toward opportunities for employment**

	All	Men	Women	p
Men get jobs easier than women	1.02	0.96	1.08	<0.0001
Men normally get promoted more than women do	1.37	1.31	1.44	<0.0001
Men normally join the Party more than women do	1.18	1.10	1.26	<0.0001
Men hold key positions at work more than women do	1.48	1.45	1.51	0.0004

Results of the analysis of this section are similar to those in the above section. Women seem to have stronger stereotyped attitudes than that of men towards the employment and promotion opportunities of women (see Table 4.17).

At the same time, across age groups, the older the age the stronger the stereotypes the person holds. The bigger gap between two genders occurs in older age groups, where women make up the higher proportions of those who still hold gender prejudiced attitudes. For instance, Table 4.18 indicates that while

women in the 18-24 age group who have less gender stereotyped attitudes consist of a slightly higher proportion compared to men of the same age group (66.3% compared to 65.15% of men), proportions of women of other age groups who still have gender stereotyped attitudes are sequentially higher than those of men of the same age groups (45.79% of women compared to 43.05% of men in age group 25-34; 63.29% of women compared to 48.17% of men in age group 35-44; 61.81% of women compared to 54.37% of men aged 45 and over).

**Table 4.18: Gender stereotypes toward opportunities for employment by age groups (%)**

	All		18-24		25-34		35-44		45+	
	Men	Women								
Less stereotyped	50.93	43.12	65.15	66.3	56.95	54.21	51.83	36.71	45.63	38.19
Stereotyped	49.07	56.88	34.85	33.7	43.05	45.79	48.17	63.29	54.37	61.81

Similarly, this gender gap tendency can be observed across geographical regions, or in rural and urban areas, or from an educational perspective

where women tend to agree more than men do on traditional gender norms about women's opportunities for employment (see Table 4.19).

**Table 4.19: Gender stereotypes toward opportunities for employment by region and living area (%)**

	North		Central		South		Rural		Urban	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Less stereotyped	56.89	43.99	47.23	42.55	48.75	42.77	48.93	39.68	55.69	50.74
Stereotyped	43.11	56.01	52.77	57.45	51.25	57.23	51.07	60.32	44.31	49.26

However, education seems to have an impact, as the higher the educational level the less gender stereotyped attitudes the person has. Table 4.20 indicates that while there are 72.92% women and 62.63% of men who still hold stereotyped attitudes, those proportions drop considerably for women and men in sequential higher education groups (60.06% of women and 51.8% of men having

a secondary education; 42.53% of women and 41.14% of men having a high school education). Women having the highest level of education seem less gender stereotyped than men of the same educational level (37.26% of women and 39.97% of men having a vocational education; and 25.49% of women and 33.01% of men having a university education and higher).

**Table 4.20: Gender stereotypes toward opportunities to employment by level of education (%)**

	Primary school & lower		Secondary school		High school		Vocational training		College/ University/ Higher	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Less stereotyped	37.37	27.08	48.2	39.94	58.86	57.47	60.03	62.74	66.99	74.51
Stereotyped	62.63	72.92	51.8	60.06	41.14	42.53	39.97	37.26	33.01	25.49

#### **Box 4.7: Gender stereotypes on work capacity: Men are more capable than women are**

*In general men are more capable than women because men have a choice and have more favorable conditions than women do. Regarding opportunities, women have to give birth to children and care for their family, they need to pay attention to such [family] matters. But men do not have to give birth so they have more chances and more time than women do, I think. (Woman, 55 years old, Hung Yen)*

*A successful woman should have both sides – success in her career and success in family matters. I have not met any women who are successful in both. Because I see if someone is successful on one side it will limit them on the other side. If a woman is successful in her career, success in family matters will be limited. (Man, 42 years old, Hung Yen)*

*In fact, men and women are equal in education and qualification. Nevertheless, for men, even if they do not have experience in a position they will still get the position, but for women there are many factors to be considered. For men it is easier to get a higher job position than for women. (Man, 44 years old, Long An)*



There are still many women who **undervalue their own capacities.**

It can be seen that the traditional norms are deeply internalized by many people, that men often occupy key positions at work and men are the ones who get promoted to higher positions more often than women do. Sharing opinions of respondents in in-depth interviews also reflect traditional gender stereotypes in people's thoughts.

In short, working in a leadership capacity for women is becoming more and more recognized and government policies are gradually improving to guarantee equity and more participation of women in the labor market. The Law on Employment ratified by the National Assembly<sup>5</sup> defines the principles on employment in Article 4: "to guarantee rights to employment, freedom of occupation choice and place of work; and equality on employment opportunities and income".

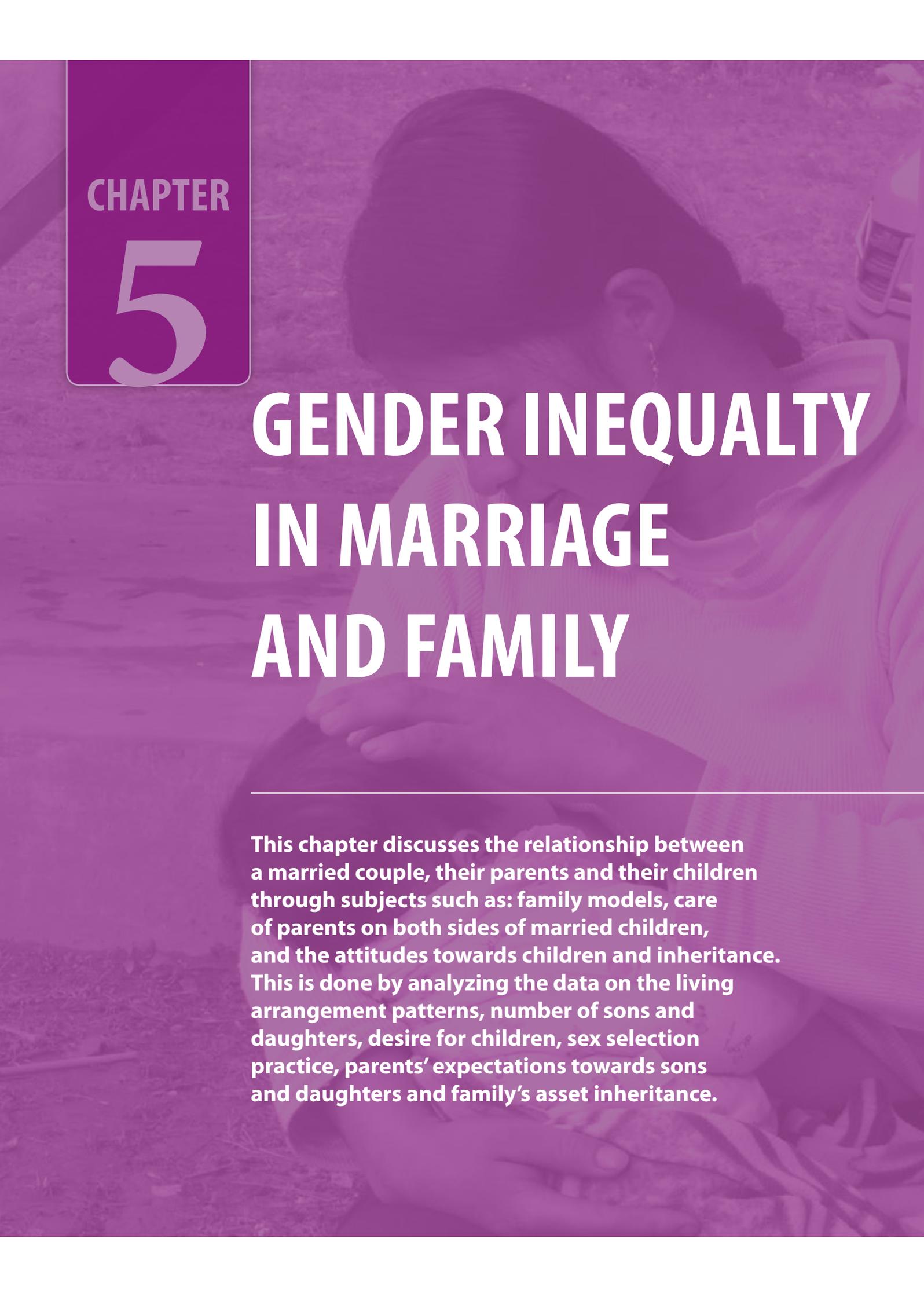
However, despite a relatively high proportion of women currently engaged in the labor market, the data of the survey indicates another reality. Gender inequality exists in many aspects where women are mostly disadvantaged –in the job choice and recruitment process, in occupational structure, in the basic benefits that men and women receive (i.e. social insurance), income and women's opportunities for promotion.

It is encouraging that the gender gap in occupation and employment is narrower among younger age groups. However, although the

gender gap is decreasing in practice, stereotypes of traditional gender norms seem to persist in people's perception regarding work capacity and/or leadership capacity of men and women, as well as stereotypes on women's capacity and women's roles. Women especially seem to hold more gender stereotyped views than men do regarding their own working capacity and opportunities. In other words, there are still many women who undervalue their own capacities; this in turn becomes a barrier to women's development. In addition, the burden of taking care of children and family is put on women's shoulders by stereotypes of traditional gender roles. Actively engaging in the labor market at the same time as being the main care taker may hinder many women from opportunities for desired jobs, or from attending professional training opportunities in order to be successful in their careers.

Changing attitudes and perceptions about traditional gender norms of men and, especially, of women in the employment area are crucial on the road to achieving full gender equality. The improvement of education and active communication of people's attitude and behavior on the working and leadership capacity of women are important channels to create the desired impact for a change towards gender equality. Women themselves should be targeted in order to change their preconceptions of their own working capabilities.

<sup>5</sup> Law on Employment ratified by the National Assembly on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 and to be valid from the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2015.

A photograph of a woman wearing a white headscarf, holding a baby in her arms. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The woman is looking down at the baby with a gentle expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with some foliage.

**CHAPTER**

# 5

# **GENDER INEQUALITY IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

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**This chapter discusses the relationship between a married couple, their parents and their children through subjects such as: family models, care of parents on both sides of married children, and the attitudes towards children and inheritance. This is done by analyzing the data on the living arrangement patterns, number of sons and daughters, desire for children, sex selection practice, parents' expectations towards sons and daughters and family's asset inheritance.**

## MARRIAGE

### MARRIAGE HOLDS SIGNIFICANT VALUE FOR VIETNAMESE MEN AND WOMEN

Findings from this survey primarily aligns with findings from other large-scale research in Vietnam, showing that marriage still holds significant value for Vietnamese people. As shown in Table 5.1, approximately 90% of the surveyed population reported having been married. Men (88.33%) were less likely than women (91.58%) to have been married. At the time of survey, 90.97% of the surveyed population were currently married and more men reported being currently married than women.

Among the population who has been married, close to 98% of them had only one marriage. About 2.05 % of the population who had been married had been married twice. Only 0.07% of the married population had been married three times. The distributions of numbers of marriages did not differ between sexes.

Among those who had at least one marriage, the average age of first marriage was 23.57 years old (SD = 4.42). However, the ages by which the first marriage occurred were different between men and women. Men were significantly older (25.00 years old) than women (22.23 years old) when they entered into their first marriage. See Table 5.1 for summaries.

**Table 5.1: %age of those married and their current status**

	All % or mean (SD)	Men % or mean (SD)	Women % or mean (SD)
Married			
Yes	89.97	88.33	91.58
Number of marriages			
1	97.98	97.64	98.29
2 or more	2.05	2.36	1.71
Age of first marriage	23.57 (4.42)	25.00 (4.22)	22.23 (4.19)
Marital status at the time of survey			
<i>Currently married</i>	90.97	96.5	85.69
<i>Widowed</i>	5.57	1.29	9.66
<i>Separated/Divorced</i>	3.46	2.21	4.65

### Marriage primarily motivated by love and based on individual decisions

Love is cited as the top reason leading to marriage for the first time, accounting for 80% of married participants. However, nearly 12% of the respondents reported being married due to them reaching the age that requires settling down with a family. The number of those who married due to their parents' decision account for 8.58% and was mostly among those who were 50 years of age or older. In addition, there are those who got married for other reasons, such as already being pregnant (1.14%). The distribution of the reasons for marriage did not differ between genders, although potential pregnancy was the fourth reason for women but the fifth reason for men. See Table 5.2 for summaries.

Regarding decisions leading to the first-

time marriage, a majority of men and women made their own decision after consulting with their parents. However, while 15.49% of women reported that their parents played a deciding role in their marriage, only 10.82% men had a similar experience. See Table 5.2.

As indicated in Table 5.1, there is an overall low percentage of divorce and separation among the surveyed population. Among those who had been married, 3.46% reported being divorced or separated ( $p=0.05$ ). The proportion of women who had divorced/separated (4.65%) is higher than that of men (2.21%). The proportion of widowed women is 7.5 times higher than that of men. See Table 5.1. This means that there are more men than women living with a spouse.

Comparison across age groups in both men and women showed that chances of being widowed

**Table 5.2: Reasons for people deciding to get married (%)**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Reason of first marriage			
<i>Love</i>	77.71	78.58	76.75
<i>It's time to get married</i>	11.87	12.37	11.41
<i>Arrangement by parents</i>	8.58	7.26	9.81
<i>Already got pregnant</i>	1.14	0.93	1.34
<i>Others reasons</i>	0.68	0.67	0.68
<i>Don't remember</i>	0.02	0.01	0.02
Marriage decision making			
<i>Completely by parents or other relatives</i>	13.32	10.82	15.49
<i>I made my decision after consulting with parents</i>	66.09	68.32	64.00
<i>Completely by me</i>	18.45	18.75	18.17
<i>Other</i>	2.19	2.09	2.28
<i>Don't remember</i>	0.04	0.01	0.06



**Family** is a woman's weakest spot, because she tends to prioritize her family above all else. To maintain stability in the family, most women would compromise their sense of equality. (Female group discussion, Ho Chi Minh City)

increased with age and was most common among those aged 45 and older, but what is noteworthy is that up to 16.76% of women in this age group are widowed. This is 7.3 times higher than men of the same age. Similarly, the rate of divorce/separation also increases with age and is most common among those aged 45 and older. The proportion

of women in this age who are currently divorced/separated is also two times higher than that of men of the same age. See Table 5.3.

The higher likelihood of men to remarry after being widowed or divorced is another explanation for the differences in marital status between men and women.

**Table 5.3: Marital status of men and women among married and previously married population by age group (%)**

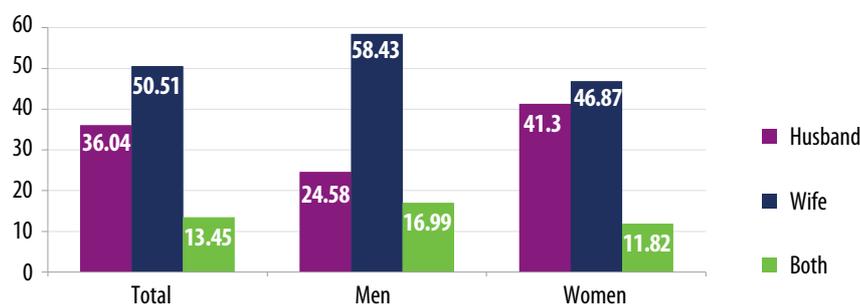
		All	18-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Women	<i>Married</i>	86.81	96.29	96.94	92.89	79.5
	<i>Widowed</i>	9.25	0	1.54	3.58	15.51
	<i>Divorced/Separated</i>	3.94	3.71	1.52	3.53	4.99
Men	<i>Married</i>	97.19	100.0	98.33	97.77	96.46
	<i>Widowed</i>	1.02	0	0.07	0.11	1.79
	<i>Divorced/Separated</i>	1.79	0	1.6	2.12	1.75

**Box 5.1: Widowed or divorced women are encouraged not to remarry for the sake of their children**

*Even if one's husband died when she was very young, nobody would ever tell her to remarry or find someone for her to rely upon. But if there is a 60 year-old widowed man, everybody would encourage him to remarry and people wouldn't wait to match him up with someone else, telling him to get a wife, to have someone to look after him. You see, nobody would advise a widowed woman with children to get married again but only encourage them to stay single to take care of her children. (Female focus group in Hung Yen)*

**Women more likely to initiate a divorce and primarily due to unequal gender relations**

Among those who were divorced, 50.51% reported that the wives were the ones who had initiated the split. However, there is a difference in reporting between men and women. Fifty-eight % of men reported that their wives were the ones who had asked for a divorce, while only one quarter of men claimed to be the one who had initiated it. Approximately half (47%) of women reported being the one who had initiated divorce and 41.3% reported that their husbands were the one who had initiated it. (See Figure 5.1)

**Figure 5.1: Proportion of those who initiated divorce, reported by gender**

The top three reasons leading to divorce include: infidelity (28.41%), disagreements about life views or lifestyle (28.26%), and domestic violence (18.56%). However, there is a gender difference in the order of those reasons leading to divorce. With men, the top three reasons leading to divorce include: disagreements about life views or lifestyle (38.81%), economic reasons (24.81%), and infidelity (20.01%). On the contrary, women's top three reasons leading to divorce were infidelity (32.29%), domestic violence (23.60%), and disagreements about life views or lifestyle (23.38%). (See Table 5.4)

There are other behavioral patterns accounting for low percentages which demonstrate gender differences and reflect traditional gender prejudices

and gender practices in Vietnamese families. For example, no men asked for divorced because their wives did not share the housework, while some women considered this a reason causing them to leave their husbands. On the contrary, no women reported initiating divorce due to problems in their sex lives, while this reason accounted for 0.45% among men.

In addition, 0.38% of men reported divorce due to their wives being sterile, while up to 2.29% of women reported divorce due to themselves being sterile. There were even women who reported the reason for their divorce was their inability to conceive a son.

All participants in the qualitative research stated that being sterile is the greatest misfortune for

**Table 5.4: % age of divorce/separation and reasons**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Divorced (among those who once got married)			
Yes (95% CI)	2.72-4.59	1.60-3.89	2.80-5.24
Reason for divorce/separation			
<i>Spouse's infidelity</i>	28.41	20.01	32.29
<i>Disagreement about life views/lifestyle</i>	28.26	38.81	23.38
<i>Domestic violence</i>	18.56	8.12	23.60
<i>Economic reasons</i>	12.62	24.81	6.99
<i>The respondent's being sterile</i>	1.57	0	2.29
<i>Wife/husband being away</i>	0.89	0.35	1.15
<i>Spouse doesn't share housework</i>	0.82	0	1.2
<i>Unable to have a son</i>	0.61	0	0.89
<i>Wife/husband's mentally ill</i>	0.18	0	0.26
<i>Problems with sex life</i>	0.14	0.45	0
<i>Wife/husband's being sterile</i>	0.12	0.38	0
<i>Other reasons</i>	7.66	7.07	7.94

a woman. This reflects a reality in Vietnam, the importance placed on women's fertility. Many men and women think sterile women worthless due to their inability to bear children, and thus not being able to realize their "endowed privilege" of being a mother and not worth being one's wife. Social

pressure on childless women is for the most part greater than on men. Family and friends as well as the women themselves tend to expect that in case a woman is sterile, she should sacrifice her own happiness so that her husband can have a chance at having children in another marriage.

### Box 5.2: Having a child is a yardstick to measure a woman's value

*There is a saying, 'A woman with children is a tree with roots.' Us women should have children at all costs. (Question: What if we can't have children because of the husband?) If we can't have children because of the husband, it is still acceptable. It means that if the husband is the cause then we can still be happy, but if we are the cause then the husband must get remarried. (Women's focus group, Hung Yen)*

*When knowing the exact reason why the couple can't have children, I tend to see women voluntarily withdraw, they initiate the split. Those are high-minded women. Another solution is that the wife doesn't say anything, the husband might come up with his own way... maybe he openly asks for a divorce. If they don't announce it, they need to find a way to have children. In my opinion, it's like that nowadays, no one will ever be happy just accepting the truth. (Men's focus group, Hung Yen)*

## LIVING ARRANGEMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON CARE FOR PARENTS

### PATRILOCAL RESIDENCE IS THE MORE PREVALENT COHABITATION MODEL

As discussed in Chapter 2, patrilocal residence or residing with the husband's family continues to be the most common cohabitation model of young couples after marriage (64.66%). Over time, young families tend to split with their parents and live in nuclear family models. At the time of the survey, 75.94% of families did not live with either set of parents. However, in cases when they still lived with parents, it was more common for them to live with

the husband's parents rather than the wife's parents. Nearly 19% were living with the husband's parents, while only just over 5% were living with the wife's parents. This explains the results listed below.

The survey also explored the degree to which married children provided different types of assistance to their birth parents. The questionnaire listed seven types of assistance and asked the participants to rank how often they provided such assistance to their birth parents. The potential scores ranged from 1 (Never) to 4 (Often). Generally, the assistance the married children provided most

frequently to their parents was visiting, followed by providing informal care, buying gifts, helping with household chores, inquiring over the phone, providing money or financial aid, and helping them to run a business. However, women provided assistance to their parents significantly less often than men did on four out of the seven types of assistance. Moreover, women visited their parents a little less often than men and offered less help in handling the household chores. However, these differences were not statistically significant at the  $p = 0.05$  level. Finally, women phoned their parents significantly more frequently than men did.

To explore the degrees and types of assistance that married children provide to their parents-in-law, the

questionnaire listed the same seven types of assistance that were listed for birth parents. Once again, potential scores ranged from 1 (Never) to 4 (Often). Generally, the assistance married children provided most frequently to their parents-in-law included informal care, followed by visiting, buying gifts, inquiring over the phone, helping with household chores, providing money and financial aid, and helping to run a business. However, women provided assistance to their parents-in-law significantly more often than men did on three out of the seven types of assistance (providing informal care, providing money or financial aid, and helping with household chores). Moreover, women called their in-laws less frequently than men did. (See Table 5.5).

**Table 5.5: Taking care of and assisting parents**

	All Mean (SD)	Men Mean (SD)	Women Mean (SD)
Assisting their birthparents <sup>a</sup>			
1. Providing informal care	3.31 (0.79)**	3.45 (0.79)	3.18 (0.78)
2. Buying gifts	2.83 (0.74)**	2.89 (0.74)	2.78 (0.73)
3. Provide money	2.20 (0.97)**	2.32 (0.99)	2.10 (0.94)
4. Inquiring after by phone	2.74 (1.16)**	2.50 (1.22)	2.94 (1.06)
5. Visiting	3.40 (0.76)**	3.45 (0.83)	3.35 (0.69)
6. Helping in house chores	2.74 (1.04)**	2.87 (1.08)	2.63 (1.00)
7. Helping to run business	1.93 (1.11)**	2.16 (1.21)	1.71 (0.99)
Assisting parents-in-law <sup>a</sup>			
1. Providing informal care	3.45 (0.80)**	3.05 (0.77)	3.25 (0.83)
2. Buying gifts	2.81 (0.72)**	2.81 (0.66)	2.80 (0.79)
3. Provide money	2.16 (0.96)**	2.12 (0.93)	2.21 (0.99)
4. Inquiring over the phone	2.75 (1.11)**	2.87 (1.02)	2.59 (1.20)
5. Visiting	3.32 (0.72)**	3.32 (0.65)	3.33 (0.81)
6. Helping in house chores	2.54 (1.05)**	2.37 (0.99)	2.75 (1.08)
7. Helping to run business	1.85 (1.05)**	1.82 (1.00)	1.88 (1.10)

\*\* Differences have statistical significance from level 1 (never): a: 1 (Never) – 4 (Often)



With current **cohabiting models and family relations**, husbands' parents receive more care and assistance than wives' parents...

The differences described above originated from the tradition of patrilocal residence or residing at the husband's family after marriage. In other words, men often live with their birth parents while women often live with their parents-in-law. Thus, the women who live with their parents-in-law do not have to visit them since they already take care of them every day. It is important to note that while women give more assistance and care to their in-laws than to their birthparents, men give

more assistance and care to their birth parents than to their in-laws. A comparison of the types of care and assistance to both sides is detailed in Table 5.6. There is clear evidence proving that parents of the wives receive considerably less care from both the wives and husbands in five out of seven types of assistance, in comparison to the care that husbands' parents are receiving. Therefore, in current Vietnamese tradition, women are considered to belong to their husbands' family.

**Table 5.6: Comparing the care and assistance given to parents on both sides**

	Husbands' parents Mean (SD)	Wives' parents Mean (SD)	Difference Mean (SD)	p
Types of assistance <sup>a</sup>				
1. <i>Providing informal care</i>	6.70 (0.19)	6.23 (0.12)	0.47 (0.11)	0.003
2. <i>Buying gifts</i>	5.69 (0.08)	5.59 (0.05)	0.10 (0.07)	0.198
3. <i>Provide money</i>	4.53 (0.15)	4.21 (0.15)	0.32 (0.04)	<0.001
4. <i>Inquiring after by phone</i>	5.08 (0.21)	5.81 (0.13)	-0.73 (0.13)	0.001
5. <i>Visiting</i>	6.78 (0.11)	6.67 (0.11)	0.10 (0.07)	0.179
6. <i>Helping in house chores</i>	5.61 (0.22)	4.99 (0.11)	0.62 (0.14)	0.002
7. <i>Helping to run business</i>	4.05 (0.32)	3.53 (0.17)	0.52 (0.18)	0.022

a: Scale 2 (Never) – 8 (Often)

The findings show that with current cohabiting models and family relations, husbands' parents receive more care and assistance than wives' parents. In other words, women have less chance of taking care of their birth parents and men also take less care of their in-laws. This reality explains why sons are still preferred over daughters in Vietnamese

families. In order to have effective intervention to reduce the imbalance of the sex ratio at birth, there needs to be a change in perception and practice when it comes to the role of sons and daughters in taking care of parents. This is so that women can take care of their birthparents more and men can also contribute to taking care of their in-laws.

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS SONS AND DAUGHTERS

This section summarizes the research results on the relationship between married people and their children. This is done by an analysis of the findings on the number of sons and daughters, sex selection practice, expectations towards sons and daughters, and the planning of family asset inheritance.

### THE SON PREFERENCE

The sex ratio at birth in Vietnam has had a tendency to increase over the last 10 years and has raised concerns as the number of boys is higher than what can be considered normal. In 2014, nationwide, sex ratio at birth was 111.5 boys over 100 girls. In many

provinces and cities, this ratio can get as high as over 125, especially in some provinces in the Red River Delta (UNFPA 2015). Recent research pointed out that the son preference originated from the patrilineal system in Vietnam has led to the practice of sex selection, causing the imbalance of sex ratio at birth (UNFPA 2015, UNFPA 2014, UNFPA 2011).

In this survey, among those who have married (regardless of the current marital status), about 90% have at least one child. However, among those having at least one child, men account for significantly more (95.12%) than women (84.76%). The average number of children is 2.46 (SD = 1.16) and there is no difference between men and women. See table 5.7.

**Table 5.7: Number of living children**

	All	Men	Women	P
	% or mean (SD)	% or mean (SD)	% or mean (SD)	
Having children	89.78	95.12	84.76	< 0.001
Number of living children	2.46 (1.16)	2.48 (1.19)	2.43 (1.14)	0.208

Among the population with children, a ratio was calculated to explore the gender composition of families. However, the calculation was restricted to those with children equal to or fewer than six. This restriction was made based on the finding that, among the surveyed Vietnamese population with children, close to 99% of them had six or fewer children. As shown in Table 5.8 families with the same number of sons and daughters account for 55.22% among families with two children, 35.64% of families with 4 children and 35.07% of families with 6 children.

Among those who only have one or two children, the number of sons is higher than that of

daughters. For example, families with only sons account for 59.06% of families, 28.51% are families with two children, 11.66% are families with 3 children, 4.39% are families with 4 children, 2.91% are families with 5 children and 4.48% are families with 6 children.

Families without a son take up to 40.94% among those with one child, 16.27% of those with two children, and 3.84% of those with 6 children. The number of daughters account for significantly more in families with 4 children or more. This result suggests that the practice of son preference still takes place, mainly among young families.

**Table 5.8: Gender ratio among children: Number of sons/Total number of children**

Ratio of sons	Number of children					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
0.00%	40.94%	16.27%	9.14%	6.03%	5.75%	3.84%
16.67%						14.73%
20.00%					19.64%	
25.00%				38.48%		
33.33%			41.74%			23.77%
40.00%					32.40%	
50.00%		55.22%		35.64%		35.07%
60.00%					27.80%	
66.67%			37.46%			8.52%
75.00%				15.45%		
80.00%					11.49%	
83.33%						9.58%
100.00%	59.06%	28.51%	11.66%	4.39%	2.91%	4.48%

Qualitative research has confirmed that son preference is still common in many areas and people around often ridicule families who have no

sons. Participants confirmed that, in many cases, domestic violence occurs when women fail to produce a son (see Box 5.3 for summaries).

### Box 5.3: “Why don’t you learn how to produce a son?”

*The feeling of having a son is still better, more preferred. Because it means that we’ll have a person to continue the family line for sure. (Male, 73 years old, Hung Yen)*

*When I only had a daughter there was a lot of pressure. My husband’s wish was to have only 2 children, but the second time I also gave birth to a daughter. He wouldn’t let me be. (Question: What did he do?) He said, «Other people gave birth to sons, how come you gave birth to daughters? Why don’t you learn how produce a son?» He said it so often, up to the point that I could no longer eat without him mentioning it. He even selected a chicken to kill and celebrate, but when he heard I gave birth to our daughter, he let go of the chicken. If I had given birth to a son, he would have killed it to celebrate. At least my mother-in-law was kind enough, once a week she went to the market to buy food for me, but my husband didn’t care. When I gave birth to our son he started paying attention to me again and took care of me. He cooked often and was very considerate. He killed the chicken. We hadn’t even finished eating the first chicken and he had already killed another. (Female, 55 years old, Hung Yen)*

*I have a brother in a rural area. He has 3 daughters and beats his wife often. He said that she doesn’t know how to give birth... because it was only a month since she gave birth and she was already pregnant again. He beats his wife too much. I feel so much pity for her. (Male, 30 years old, Ho Chi Minh City)*

## THE STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES TO HAVE SONS

According to the results of recent research (UNFPA 2011; UNFPA 2010), there are many people employing different methods to give birth to sons. To gain more understanding about this practice, this survey also investigated what methods, if any, respondents adopted to ensure the birth of at least one son.

As demonstrated in Table 5.9, approximately 2% of married or previously married people reported that they applied certain methods to have a son. Women account for a higher percentage of those who employed methods to give birth to a son, perhaps due to them being

the ones who applied those methods, rather than men.

Among those who have employed at least one method to have a son, up to 72.85% reported having used common/popular scientific methods like Oriental or Western medicine, advice from doctors, calculating the ovulation dates, diet and different sex positions to enhance the chance of conceiving a son. Up to 9% reported using ultrasound and abortion as a method of having sons. Over 10% carried out religious practices such as consulting a fortunate teller or praying. Last but not least, up to 11.79% reported giving birth until they had a son. It is worth noting that the percentage of men reporting this “method” is 2.5 times higher than that of women.

**Table 5.9: Used methods to have a son**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Have you ever used any methods to have a son?			
Yes	1.89	2.39	1.42
No	88.05	85.90	90.13
Not applicable	10.06	11.71	8.45
Methods used (Among those employing methods to have a son)			
Common scientific methods*	72.85	71.44	75.03
Medical method (ultrasound and abortion)	8.65	7.59	10.36
Consulting fortunate teller/praying	10.63	9.57	12.3
Giving birth until a son was born	11.79	15.38	6.14
Remarry	0	0	0

\* Including taking medicines, advice from doctors, determining ovulation dates, nutrition, choosing sex positions.



In-depth analysis showed various notable results. Across different age groups, women at a younger age tend to report having used more common scientific methods, especially those aged 25-34 and 35-44, with a percentage of 80.87% and 74.45% respectively. These two age groups also reported the highest percentage of employing medical methods (22.53% and 11.89%).

Among men, those aged 35-44 reported employing common scientific methods the most, those aged 45 and older have the highest percentage of using medical methods (15.47%). Those giving birth until a son was born are mostly concentrated in the group of men and women aged 45 and older (12.68% and 27.95%, respectively).

Considering levels of education, those who have higher levels of education tend to use more common scientific methods. Specifically, the two groups of women with the highest level of education (those with college/vocational school and university or above) have the highest percentage of employing common scientific methods (48.16% and 12.12%).

Considering variables representing regions and ethnicities, both men and women of the Kinh ethnicity in north and central Vietnam have a higher rate of employing common scientific and medical methods to have a son than those in the south of Vietnam and those of ethnic minorities.

In terms of income, those who tend to employ medical methods belong to the middle or higher income categories.

The findings of this survey provided additional evidence to confirm the trends of gender imbalance at birth found by the 2009 Population and Housing Census and the 2014 Intercensal Population and Housing Survey. That is, the imbalance of sex ratio at birth is positively associated with the level of education and income of women and more prevalent in northern Vietnam (UNFPA 2015, UNFPA 2013).

**Sons are preferred primarily for symbolic values and roles, daughters are preferred for pragmatic functions.**

To understand the perceptions of families toward having sons and daughters, the survey participants were asked the questions “Must a family have a son?” and “Must a family have a daughter?”. The result presented in table 5.10 shows that two thirds of those asked answered “No” to both questions. This may reflect the results of education and communication campaigns on sex ratio at birth carried out widely and frequently over the recent years. However, those surveyed who consider that “families must have a son” still account for higher percentage (28.94%) than those who consider that “families must have a daughter” (24.04%). Slightly more women than men think that families must a son/a daughter.

**Table 5.10: “All children are children”, but...**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Must a family have a son?			
Yes	28.94	28.15	29.72
No	69.98	70.67	69.31
Don't know/Haven't thought about it	1.08	1.18	0.98
Must a family have a daughter?			
Yes	24.04	23.27	24.78
No	77.12	77.25	76.99
Don't know	1.22	1.54	0.92

The percentage of those who think that a family must have a son is concentrated mostly among those aged 18-24 and 35-44. More particularly, among those aged 18-24, this mindset is shared by 30.67% of women and 29.74% of men. Among those aged 35-44 it is more common, with 34% of women and 31% of men. The fact that these two groups are at an active reproductive age may help to explain the desire for a son is higher than in other age groups.

Levels of education also tend to impact the son preference. The lower the level of education, the more people think that “a family must have a son.”

Those living in northern and central Vietnam and are farmers or manual laborers have a higher rate of agreeing that “a family must have a son” than those living in the south, as well as those with other occupations. Overall, women of these groups tend to agree more with this statement than men, but men in urban areas and central Vietnam have a higher agreement rate than women of the same groups.

The top reasons for why it is a must to have a son are due to the symbolic values of sons, in particular

“To continue the family line” (83.22%) and “To worship ancestors” (53.85%). They are followed by more practical reasons such as “Sons are the main financial support” (20.28%), “To support aged parents” (17.16%), “To inherit family assets” (12.30%), and “To have a labor force for the family” (5.36%). For some people, a son also helps “improve the social status of the family” (5.36%) more than a daughter does (1.35%). Men and women are different in only one case: about 4% of women tend to think that “Sons are the family’s main financial support” more than men do. (See table 5.11).

The reasons the surveyed population stated for why ‘A family must have a daughter’ are mainly in association with pragmatic expectations, specifically, the care that a daughter will provide to her parents. The two most important selected reasons were “To support aged parents” (54.27%) and “To provide emotional support” (45.36%) with a significant difference between men and women. They are followed by the expectation that daughters will “work on house chores” (35.73%).

**Table 5.11: Reasons for son/daughter preference**

	All (%)		Men (%)		Women (%)	
	Son	Daughter	Son	Daughter	Son	Daughter
To continue the family line	83.22	4.39	85.21	4.40	81.38	4.37
To worship ancestors	53.85	4.63	54.34	4.91	53.39	4.38
To inherit family's assets	12.30	2.22	12.34	2.31	12.26	2.13
To improve family's status	5.36	1.35	4.57	1.05	6.09	1.65
To have a labor force for the family	11.10	4.31	10.62	4.27	11.54	4.34
Sons are the family's main financial support	20.28	4.01	17.98	3.80	22.41	4.21
To support aged parents	17.16	54.27	16.97	49.85	18.18	53.36
To provide emotional support	3.27	45.36	2.75	38.84	3.74	48.00
Haven't thought about it	0.27	35.73	0.51	34.51	0.06	36.85



“While in the North, only sons can continue family line and worship their ancestors, **daughters in the South can assume these roles.**”

The variables of age, levels of education and place of residence do not hold much significance for the two top reasons for why a family considers that it must have a son: “to continue the family line” and “to worship ancestors.” This might be due to these two traditions being deeply rooted in Vietnamese society throughout the centuries.

Regional factors have more notable effects. Those in the north, followed by central Vietnam, tend to emphasize these two reasons more than those living in the South. This holds true for both men and women. Particularly, 84.6% of women in the north, 81.2% in central Vietnam underscore the reason of “to continue the family line,” compared to 78.26% of women in the south. This percentage among men across the north, central and south of Vietnam is 92.47%, 83.68% and 82.08%, respectively. A more obvious difference is observed among those who stress the reason of worshipping

ancestors. The difference is between 72.43% of women from the north, 52.85% of women in central Vietnam and 34.21% of women from the south. The same pattern is observed among men across three regions with the respective percentage of 76.41%, 52.23% and 39.57%.

Regarding the statement “a family must have a daughter,” the factor of regions once again has a strong influence on the two reasons “to continue the family line” and “to worship ancestors.” None of those from the north agree with these reasons. Those who agree that daughters can play these roles live mostly in the South. The survey’s results also confirmed, along with the findings of recent qualitative research on the rigid patrilineal system in the north and the flexibility of the family system in the south when it comes to ancestor worship, that daughters can take this role whether they are married or not (UNFPA 2011).

#### **Box 5.4: Daughters in the South are allowed to perform ancestor worship**

*There is virtually no case of worshipping ancestors of both sides of the family in one’s house. I’ve never heard of it. Even if the family doesn’t have a son and the daughters got married and want to worship their own ancestors, they wouldn’t be allowed to. They can perform the rituals elsewhere but they aren’t allowed to do it in their home. If they want to, they can go back to their birthparents’ house to do it. The house is for worshipping the husbands’ ancestors. You can’t bring your own ancestor’s photos nor incenses from your own home to worship there. (Women’s focus group, Hung Yen)*

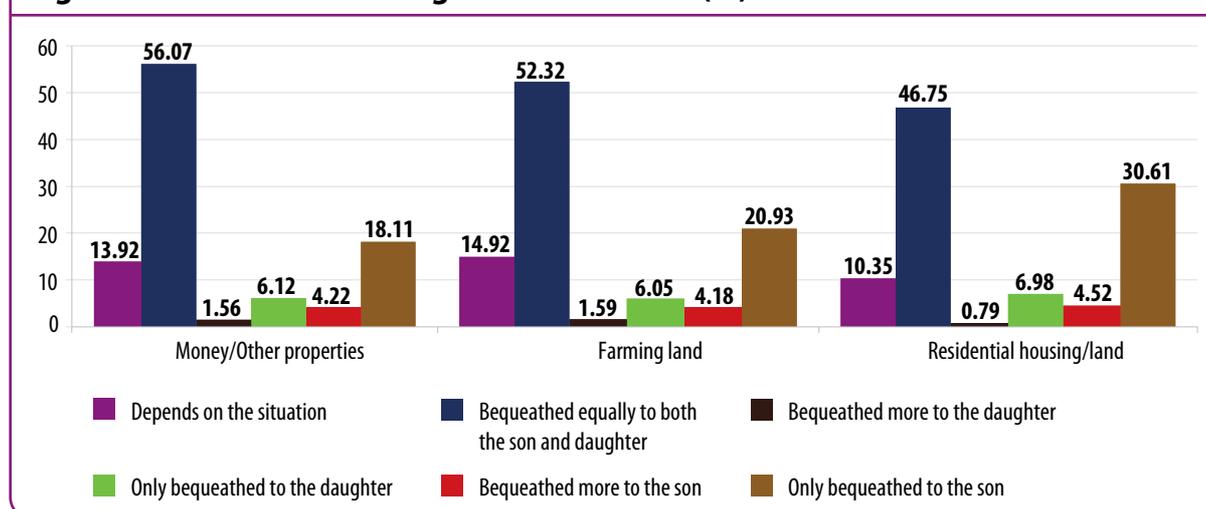
Residents in Long An do care for ancestor worship but are more flexible in that both sons and daughters can play this role: *In my own family, I myself take care of the ancestor worship for both my family and my wife’s family. Because my wife is an only child, I take care of both families. I do everything. (Question: When you do both, do your own parents protest?) No, my parents don’t protest since they know my wife’s family situation. Because it’s the child’s responsibility. Besides, they already died, whatever we offer them, it’s also just a symbolic ritual to light incense, nothing too showy or complicated so my parents don’t say anything. (Male, 55 years old, Long An)*

## SONS INHERIT MORE FAMILY ASSETS

Around 31% of the surveyed population already has plans to distribute family assets to their offspring. Over a half of them plan to distribute their family assets to both their sons and daughters equally. However, up to 30.61% plan to distribute house and/or land to their sons, which is six times higher than those who plan to do the same for their daughters. About 21% plan to distribute farming land to their sons, a number four times higher than those

who plan to do the same for their daughters. Over 18% of the families will give their sons money and valuable assets, a number three times higher than those that plan to do the same for their daughters. The number of people who plan to give more of the above-mentioned assets to their sons is many times higher than those who plan to do the same for their daughters. Notably, the number of women who plan to give assets to their sons account for a higher percentage than the number of men who plan to do the same. (See Figure 5.2. for summaries).

**Figure 5.2: Plan of distributing assets to children (%)**



People of an older age, lower level of education, who live in a rural area, in the north and are of the Kinh ethnicity, are low income and farmers tend to leave their assets to their sons only. There is no difference between men and women in this case. The impact of the regional factor is especially

obvious. For example, women in the north who plan to distribute their house/residential land, farming land and other valuable assets to their sons tend to account for a higher percentage, about two or three times higher than those in central or south Vietnam. Similar differences are observed among



More families plan to **distribute assets to sons**, especially when it comes to land and houses.

men across the three regions. This finding provides more evidence of the flexibility of families in the south and the rigidity of family traditions in the northern Vietnam.

It is worth noting that gender structure of the children in the family also has an influence on the plans to distribute the parents' assets. Those who

plan to leave their assets to the daughters are only son-less families. Those who plan to leave the assets to their sons are only daughter-less families and those with both sons and daughters. Those who plan to equally distribute assets to their sons and daughters regardless of gender are the families with both sons and daughters.

#### **Box 5.5: It is more likely for daughters in the south to inherit assets**

According to the findings of qualitative research, leaving a house/land only to the sons is still a practice most common in the north:

*In my opinion, we can't leave assets to the daughters. According to current traditional customs, the sons need to inherit the assets because of traditions, the traditions of worshipping ancestors. Then there is the responsibility of the son to keep a family, taking care of parents. That's why the responsibility of the sons is always more important than the daughters.* (Male focus group, Hung Yen)

One of the most common reasons for parents not wanting to share the family's assets with daughters is the fear that the family assets - land might be dispersed or fall in the hands of outsiders:

*My parents really love their children and don't discriminate between their sons and daughters, but as of now they haven't left me any assets. There is a case that I recently heard about where a family had a daughter and two sons. In their recent asset distribution nothing was left for the daughter. The parents initially wanted to give her some assets but then decided not to, saying: "If we give you the assets then it goes to your husband's family, your husband gets it all, your children get it all, you wouldn't get much of it anyway".* (Female, 31 years old, Hung Yen)

In the south, land plots are perhaps larger and there has been little influence from Confucianism, which allows families to leave the assets to the daughters just like in the case of the man below :  
*We need to give assets to daughters, not only the sons, because they are also our children. For example, if the husband's family gives her 1000m<sup>2</sup> of land, I give 1000m<sup>2</sup> of land, then she has 2000m<sup>2</sup> allowing her to make better income. Now I don't differentiate between sons and daughters. There might still be some families who concern themselves with that but they will change gradually. It has already changed a lot.* (Male, 58 years old, Long An)

## GENDER-BASED PERCEPTIONS WITH REGARDS TO SONS AND DAUGHTERS

This section displays the quantitative and qualitative findings on gender-based perceptions with regards to sons and daughters, namely reproduction, ancestor worship, continuing the family line and property inheritance. After reviewing the research results, we categorized the responses into two groups: a group with inequitable gender attitudes and a group with more equitable gender attitudes. The group with inequitable gender attitudes includes those with rigid traditional perceptions of values and the roles of women and men. For example, they support the tradition that “Ancestor worship can only be performed by the sons”, “The family’s line must be continued by the sons”, or “families with daughters only are unfortunate”, and so on. They are also less supportive of the statements such as “Daughters can also perform ancestor worship” and “Daughters can also continue the family’s line”.

On the other hand, the group with more equitable gender attitudes includes those with more flexible and progressive perceptions of the roles of sons and daughters. They do not tend to agree with the rigid traditions regarding sons and are more supportive of statements promoting the roles and values of daughters.

### **Inequitable attitudes on gender values and roles are still prevalent but positive attitudes are becoming more common**

To measure the level of inequality with regards to gender values and roles of men and women within the family, the questionnaire listed 11 statements on gender roles and values relating to reproduction,

ancestor worship and property inheritance. The participants were asked to choose their answer for each statement from the Likert scale with three options: disagree (0), partially agree (1), and agree (2). It is worth noting that with two statements “Daughters could also perform ancestor worship” and “Daughters could also continue family’s line,” the answers are reverse: agree (0); partially agree (1); and disagree (2). The mean was calculated for each statement. The higher the mean, the more inequitable attitudes the person holds.

The next step was to calculate the total score for all 11 statements. The median created the cutoff point, distinguishing inequitable gender attitude or equitable gender attitude. A median of 5 was calculated, thus people who have a median within the range of 0 to 5 were categorized as having equitable gender attitudes and those with a median higher than 5 were classified as belonging to groups with inequitable gender attitudes.

Using that method, 47.94% of the participants were categorized as belonging to the group associated with inequitable gender attitudes with regards to gender roles and values as mentioned through the statements listed in Table 5.12. More men (47.94%) belong to the group of inequitable gender attitudes compared to women (45.97%). Those of an older age and a lower level of education have more inequitable gender attitudes. Those of Kinh ethnicity, living in rural areas, who have low incomes and hold farming or manual labor jobs also hold more inequitable gender attitudes than other groups. Notably, while gender differences



were only illustrated through a number of statements, women tended to agree with statements that husbands could abandon their wives, either voluntarily or by force exerted by the family, if the wives failed to give birth to a son. (See Table 5.12)

In general, respondents expressed more support towards statements appreciating the roles and values

of women in the family. For example, they tend to agree with statements such as “Daughters could also perform ancestor worship” and “Daughters could also continue the family’s line”. However, they tend to disagree with statements such as “Daughters could also inherit the family’s properties”. Ironically, more women than men agree with this statement.

**Table 5.12: Perceptions towards gender values and roles**

	All Mean (SD)	Men Mean (SD)	Women Mean (SD)	p
A man must have a son to prove his real manhood	0.53 (0.78)	0.51 (0.77)	0.54 (0.79)	0.1177
Couples who have only daughters are the unfortunate ones	0.44 (0.74)	0.44 (0.73)	0.44 (0.74)	0.6617
Only sons can worship ancestors	0.69 (0.78)	0.72 (0.79)	0.67 (0.78)	0.001
Daughters can also worship ancestors	0.55 (0.71)	0.57 (0.72)	0.52 (0.70)	0.0009
A family must have a son to continue the family’s line	0.93 (0.83)	0.97 (0.82)	0.90 (0.83)	0.0005
Daughters can also continue the family’s line	0.90 (0.82)	0.94 (0.82)	0.88 (0.82)	0.0016
A family must have a son to inherit the assets	0.54 (0.69)	0.55 (0.68)	0.53 (0.59)	0.0733
Daughters can also inherit the family’s assets	0.26 (0.51)	0.26 (0.51)	0.26 (0.51)	0.9261
If the wife can’t bear a son, the husband can leave her or divorce her, or have sons with other women	0.09 (0.36)	0.08 (0.32)	0.11 (0.40)	0.0001
If the wife can’t bear a son, the husband’s family can force the husband to leave his wife	0.08 (0.32)	0.06 (0.28)	0.09 (0.36)	<0.0001
Sons are important, to take care of parents when they get old/sick	0.86 (0.75)	0.89 (0.74)	0.82 (0.75)	0.0001

The qualitative research also documented similar results. Inequitable gender attitude regarding values and roles of women and men in the family is still prevalent in people’s mindset. However,

more positive and progressive opinions are also perceptible. Even in areas where traditional customs are still widely persistent, there are people with positive attitudes.

Although almost all participants interviewed confirmed the prevalent perception of male roles in continuing the family's line and ancestor worship, some people noticed the positive changes that are happening, as shown in Box 5.6.

**Box 5.6: “Nowadays we don’t discriminate, daughters can also worship their ancestors”**

*Now I think sons or daughters, whoever is capable, [must take the responsibility] of doing that. As long as they genuinely want to, who knows if the sons are more willing to do it... Now I see a lot of families where the daughters worship the ancestor, even the husband’s ancestors. (Female, 43 years old, Ho Chi Minh City)*

*Still, many people support that daughters assume the traditional roles of sons, even those in small towns where old-fashioned traditions are still prevalent, as in the case of Hung Yen: In my opinion, this belongs to the feudal ideals but nowadays people are stopping discrimination. Daughters also have the right to worship ancestors. I think, if we don’t allow the son-in-law to worship his wife’s ancestors, it’s not right. Everyone should do it, it’s all acceptable, no problem. (Male focus group, Hung Yen)*

*I think when it comes to your children, you would also agree to let them worship their wife’s ancestors. Why not let them? From here on out we should change such old-fashioned practices. (Female, 47 years old, Hung Yen)*

**Women’s names in the family’s annals – from “the outsider” to “the family’s honor”**

According to tradition, Vietnamese women’s names are not to be recorded in their family’s annals as they are considered “outsiders” belonging to the husband’s family when married. In other words, Vietnamese women are not considered part of their own family; rather, she is assumed to belong to her husband’s family.

Among those who are married, only 28.5% of respondents reported that they knew whether or not their families have annals. But compared to men, less women are aware of whether or not their families have annals. Among those knowing that their families have annals, around 90% reported having their name in the annals. However, women have less opportunity to be recorded in the annals.

Among those who are married, only 24.68% know that their in-law families have annals. In that, over 76% informed that their name was recorded. Over 80% of men reported having their names in their wife’s family annals. Meanwhile, 71% of women reported having their names recorded in their husband’s family annals. See Table 5.13

**Table 5.13: Whose names are written on the family annals?**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	p
Does your family have annals?				0.000
Yes	28.50	31.91	24.91	
No	65.18	64.56	65.83	
Don't know	6.32	3.53	9.26	
If yes, is your name on the family annals?				0.002
Yes	89.89	97.31	79.87	
No	6.54	1.70	13.09	
Don't know	3.56	1.00	7.04	
Does your spouse's family have annals?				0.040
Yes	24.68	27.02	22.46	
No	64.93	66.36	63.42	
Don't know	10.39	11.17	9.56	
If yes, is your name on your spouse's family annals?				0.045
Yes	76.66	80.88	71.84	
No	14.91	10.31	20.16	
Don't know	8.43	8.81	7.99	

From qualitative research in a commune outside of Hanoi, all 18 people who were inter-viewed reported that in the commune, daughters do not have their names in any family annals. If they do,

it is only their names without any further information, while men tend to have a more comprehensive biography, including careers and other personal information. However, this reality is changing.

### Box 5.7: Women could also have their names in family annals

*In my village, we used to consider that “women are outsiders to the family”, that’s why they don’t have their names in the family annals. Because as daughters grow up, they get married and move to their husband’s family. Also, only sons are members of the clan, so they need to have their name recorded to participate in the clan’s matters, making contributions and such. Whichever family’s line has people who succeed, they need to record their names to set examples for younger generations. It’s also the pride of the family. In the commune, all families compete with one another like that. If daughters succeed, they won’t have their names written down. They are members of other families, why the need to write down their names? (Male, 64 years old, Hanoi)*

However, another member of this commune said that some families currently started to record the names of daughters and even more so among those who are successful. A person in charge of a family’s annals said:

*Nowadays, families have less children, if they don’t write down the name of the daughters, there won’t be a lot of people left to record. Families that have successful daughters tend to write their names down more, making it an honor for the family, the clan. These women do indeed contribute a lot to their families and clan. There are those who contribute money to build the ancestors’ tombs, donating to educational foundations and such. Older people weren’t so comfortable about this [recording women’s name] at first, but afterwards they also felt very proud. (Male, 36 years old, Hanoi)*

### Factors affecting the practice of sex selection and asset distribution planning

Logistic regression models were applied to identify influencing factors on gender perceptions related to sons and daughters, practice of sex selection and planned property distribution to children. In each model socio-demographic variables serve as independent variables (see Table 5.14).

**Model 1** examines the association between independent variables and gender perceptions related to sons and daughters. Dependent variables are inequitable gender attitudes related to sons and daughters through statements on sons' values and roles such as: "to continue the family's line", "to inherit the family's assets", "if the wife can't bear a son, the husband can leave her or divorce her, or have sons with other women", "a man must have a son to prove his real manhood", and so on (see Table 5.14 for more details). Generally speaking, more men tend to have inequitable gender attitudes than women do (the rate of men with inequitable gender attitudes is 1.10 times to 1.33 times higher than that of women in the same age, education, place of residence, job/occupation and income- groups, a statistically significant difference). Another influencing factor with statistical significance is region. People in the central region of Vietnam tend to have more inequitable gender attitudes than those in the north do, though sharing characteristics such as sex, age, education, income and occupation. Compared to people working in agriculture, people who work in manual labor tend to hold

more inequitable gender attitudes. Income is also an influencing factor as higher income groups have more inequitable gender attitudes than lower income groups.

**Model 2:** Practice of sex selection. There is a large difference between those who hold inequitable gender attitudes and those who hold equitable gender attitudes. The former has a rate of using methods to producing a son 3.43 times higher than that of the latter (95% CI: 2.32-5.06), a statistically-significant difference. Education also exerts a strong influence on the practice of sex selection. People with a higher education accounted for using these methods more than people with lower education. With this model, income also proves to be a factor influencing the practices of sex selection. The higher the income is, the more likely people will practice sex selection methods. This may relate to the cost required to carry out these methods, hence the cost is more affordable for richer people who want to produce a son.

**Model 3:** Asset distribution planning favoring sons. People with inequitable gender attitudes tend to give assets such as land and houses only to sons at a rate 1.5 times higher than that of people with equitable gender attitudes (95% CI: 1.21-1.84,  $p < 0.001$ ). In this model, the regional variable has a vivid effect; northern people are two to three times more likely to give assets to their sons compared to central and southern people. The difference between regions is statistically significant with  $p < 0.001$ . The other factors such as education, age, occupation and income show differences but are not statistically significant.



Younger age, higher education and more trained occupations have a more **positive effect on equitable gender attitudes.**

**Table 5.14: Influencing factors upon gender perceptions, practice of sex selection and asset distribution planning for children**

Variables	Model 1: Inequitable attitudes with regards to gender values and roles in family	Model 2: Used practice sex selection methods	Model 3: Planning to give houses/ lands only to sons
Inequitable gender attitudes (Equitable gender attitudes = ref.)	NA	3.43 ***	1.5 ***
<i>Sex (female=ref.)</i>	1.22 ***	1.09	0.87
Education level (<Primary=ref.)			
<i>Secondary</i>	0.53 ***	1.26	1.02
<i>High school</i>	0.37 ***	1.86 *	0.75
<i>College/Vocational training</i>	0.26 ***	2.86 *	1.14
<i>University or higher</i>	0.32 ***	2.63	0.73
Age groups (18-24 = ref.)			
25-35	0.97	3.85	0.67
35-44	1.07	5.92	1.11
45+	1.08	3.85	1.59
Urban (Rural=ref.)	0.96	0.88	0.91
Region (North=ref.)			
<i>Center</i>	1.31 ***	1.54	0.42 ***
<i>South</i>	1.08	1.08	0.35 ***
Job/Occupation (Farmer=ref.)			
<i>Management/professional</i>	0.87	1.2	1.12
<i>Worker</i>	1.11	0.79	0.82
<i>Services</i>	1.18 **	0.98	1.01
Income quintile (the first poorest=ref.)			
<i>Near poor</i>	1.26 **	1.36 *	0.99
<i>Middle</i>	1.11	1.93	0.87
<i>Better-off</i>	1.32 **	2.24 *	0.94
<i>Richest</i>	1.05	2.47 **	1.03
R2	4.02%	6.81%	5%

Statistical significance: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Through statistical models, it can be seen that socio-demographic factors have different levels of influence upon respondents' perceptions, attitudes or family life practices. There is no single factor that has a consistent influence with the same degree of influence on all studied domains. Looking at their degree of influence, however, the variables of sex, age, education, place of residence and region seems to have more effect on some domains than other variables.

In turn, gender-based perceptions have a considerable effect on gender practices. As discussed in the descriptive sections as well as in the logistic models, there is a statistically significant association between inequitable gender attitudes with inequitable gender practices in all domains studied.

In conclusion, at the present time in Vietnam, residing with the husband's family is still a more common cohabitation model than to reside with the wife's family, especially immediately following marriage. This leads to the husband's parents receiving more care and assistance. This traditional practice limits the role of the daughter in her birthparents' family and strengthens the values as well as the role of the sons. Moreover, in the context of decreasing fertility and wide access to medical technology, the son preference which is rooted in the patrilocal tradition may lead to societal pressure for couples to practice sex selection methods.

Perhaps, thanks to on-going nationwide programs and communication campaigns on the imbalance of the sex ratio at birth, the majority of respondents reported holding more equitable gender attitudes on the values and roles of both

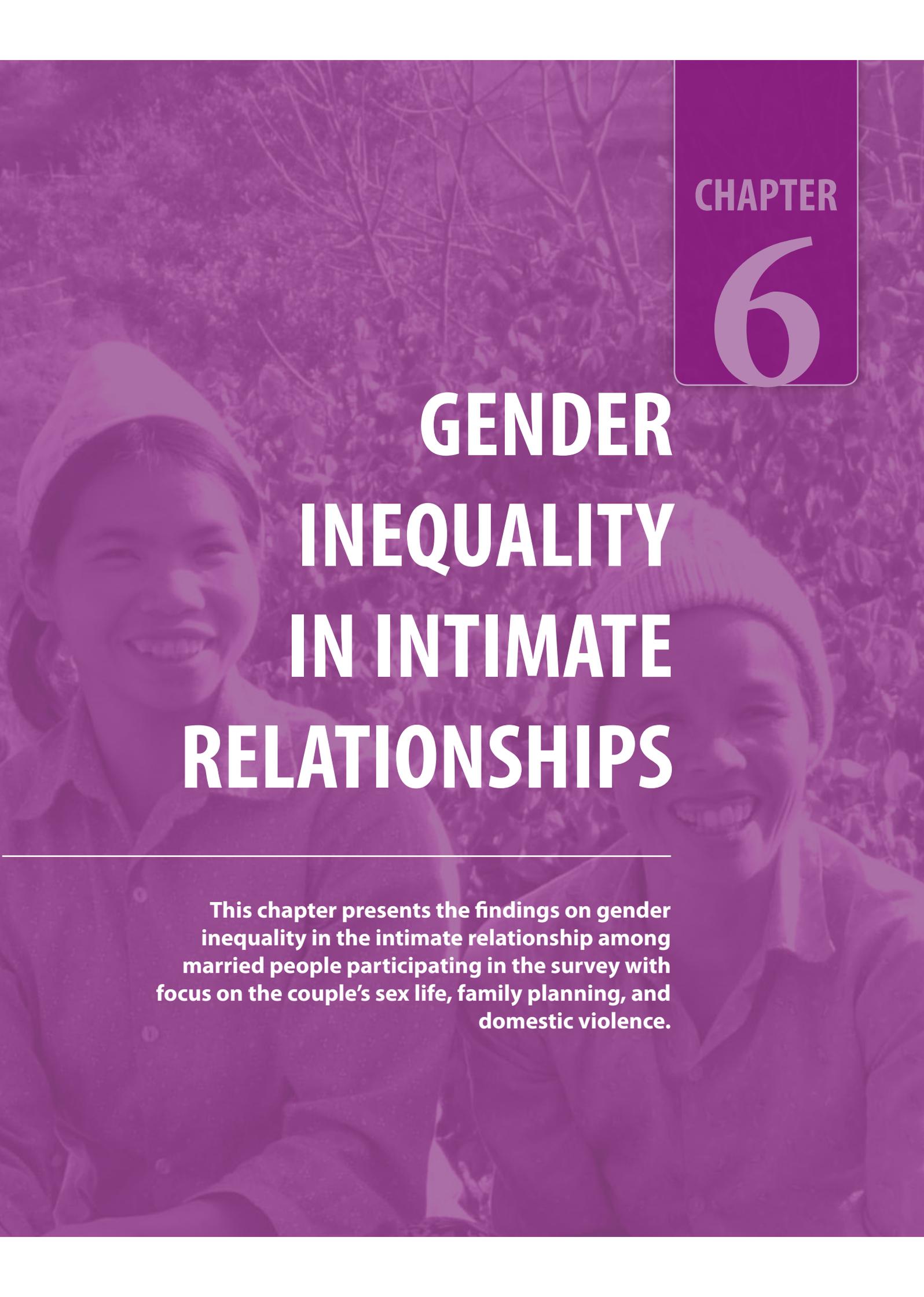
sons and daughters. In reality, there are still couples who reported applying common scientific and medical methods to have a son.

Research findings show that the majority of families hold equitable gender attitudes towards their children, though at the same time having different perspectives about sons and daughters. Sons are preferred mainly because of their traditional symbolic values related to their role in family continuation and ancestor worship. On the other hand, daughters are preferred for pragmatic values associated with their roles in providing care and emotional support to their parents.

Inequality continues to exist in asset distribution. More families plan to distribute assets to sons, especially when it comes to land and houses. In some families, daughters are also given a small amount of assets, yet they are mainly money and other non-land assets.

Perceptions on the values and roles of daughters have the tendency to be change progressively. Many people agree that daughters can also continue the family's line, worship ancestors and inherit family property. Age, education and job/occupation factors have a more vivid impact on this perception than other independent variables. Specifically, younger age, higher education and more trained occupations have a more positive effect on equitable gender attitudes.

Survey results on the tradition of family annals indicate that women tend to have their names recorded in the family annals more often. Small family size and the improved position of women within private and public spheres are possible reasons explaining this trend.



CHAPTER

# 6

# GENDER INEQUALITY IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

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**This chapter presents the findings on gender inequality in the intimate relationship among married people participating in the survey with focus on the couple's sex life, family planning, and domestic violence.**

## A MARRIED COUPLE'S SEX LIFE

Among the currently married population, this survey also inquired about their opinions and experiences regarding sexual activities. Note: the results presented below excluded those participants who were not in active marital relationships at the time (people who were separated from their spouses were excluded).

### MEN ARE THE ONES TO INITIATE SEX

Among the currently married population surveyed, about 31% reported having sexual activity with their spouse at least once a week. Approximately one third reported having sex two to three times monthly, and about one quarter reported a frequency of sexual activity of less than once per month. Finally, about 11% of married couples reported that they had not had sex in the previous 12 months. The reported frequency of sexual activity

was slightly different between men and women, with more men reporting a higher sexual frequency and fewer men reporting no sexual activity in the previous 12 months. See Table 6.1 for summaries.

Among those married that had had sex at least once in the past 12 months, about a third reported that both genders initiated sexual encounters equally. However, a large difference in self-reporting was observed between married men and women. According to men's reports, 54% of them initiated sexual activity while less than 7% reported their wives did. However, according to the women, about 70% reported their husbands initiated sexual activity and less than 6% of women reported initiating sexual activity. Moreover, more men (39.35%) than women (23.93%) reported that initiation of sexual activity was shared equally within the relationship. See Table 6.1 for summaries.

**Table 6.1: Reported frequency of sex among those who are married**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Frequency of sexual activities			
<i>Every day or more</i>	0.48	0.69	0.26
<i>From 1 to 6 times a week</i>	30.92	33.30	28.41
<i>From 2 to 3 times a month</i>	32.35	31.79	32.94
<i>Once a month or less</i>	25.30	24.36	26.28
<i>Not having sex during last 12 months</i>	11.06	9.44	12.76
Sexual initiation			
<i>Respondent</i>	30.85	54.02	5.56
<i>Spouse</i>	37.17	6.64	70.52
<i>Both initiate equally</i>	31.98	39.35	23.93



Women should be **sexually naïve and passive** in sexual relation to men.

**Age** is the most important factor determining the sex life of a couple. For both men and women, the higher the age the lower the frequency of sexual activities. However the difference also increases with age. Specifically, 23.57% of women aged 45 and older reported not having sex within the last 12 months prior to the survey, while the percentage of the men of the same age group only account for 16.28%. This result reflects a common perception in Vietnam that women at the time of menopause onward do not have, or lose their sexual desire.

However, the survey results also show that women of an older age tend to have a higher tendency to initiate sex. Conversely, men of an older age tend to initiate sex less.

**Education** also has obvious impacts on sex life, especially among women. Both men and women with high levels of education reported having a higher frequency of sexual activities. On the contrary, the lower the level of education, the less sex the respondents of the survey reported having within the previous 12 months. Both sexes tend to actively engage more in the act if they both have higher levels of education. Women of lower levels of education tend to report that their husbands are the ones who initiate sex more often. Meanwhile, men regardless of levels of education report a low percentage of their wives initiating sex.

**Place of residence** also holds a significant influence on the sex life of married couples. Both men and women in urban areas reported a higher frequency of sexual activities than those in rural areas. Rural men who initiate sex accounted for a higher percentage than those in urban areas. However, while there is virtually no difference between men in urban and rural areas when

it comes to reporting on their wives initiating sex, this difference among women is 10%. Up to 73.36% of women in rural areas reported that their husbands initiated sex, comparing to 63.48% of women in urban area.

#### **WOMEN ARE LESS SATISFIED WITH THEIR SEX LIFE AND EXPERIENCE MORE UNWANTED SEX**

When asked to evaluate the frequency of sexual activity in the past 12 months, about 91% of those who reported sexual activity at least once in the past 12 months reported that the frequency was “just right.” Notwithstanding an overall high rate of satisfaction with sexual frequency, men and women evaluated their sexual frequencies differently. More women than men reported that the frequency of sexual activity was too much for them.

When asked to evaluate their general sexual satisfaction in the past 12 months, more than 96% of the married population (39.43% + 56.97%) who had sex at least once in the past 12 months indicated that they were “very satisfied” or “quite satisfied” with their sexual relationships. Nevertheless, men and women evaluated their sexual satisfaction differently. Women were more likely to report being less satisfied than men. See Table 6.2 for summaries.

Regarding the experience of unwanted sex in the last 12 months, about 8% reported at least one incident of unwanted sex in the past year. Note that over 13% of sexually active married women reported at least one occasion of unwanted sex, while only 3% of the sexually active married men also reported at least one incident of unwanted sex.

**Table 6. 2: Evaluation of the sex life of those married who have had sex at least once in the last 12 months**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Rating of sexual activities' frequency			
<i>A lot</i>	1.73	1.16	2.35
<i>Not enough</i>	7.12	7.44	6.77
<i>About enough</i>	91.15	91.41	90.88
Satisfied with their sex life			
<i>Satisfied</i>	96.26	97.41	95.00
<i>Not satisfied</i>	3.74	2.59	5.00
Having experienced unwanted sex			
<i>Yes</i>	7.87	2.85	13.35

Demographic and social factors such as age, level of education and place of residence have a significant influence on the sexual relations of married couples. The percentage of those having experienced unwanted sex concentrate mostly among young women with low level of education and living in rural areas. 18.82% of women aged 18-24 reported having experienced unwanted sex. This percentage is 3 times higher than that of men of the same age group. Women of an older age group reported less unwanted sex. Among women who have primary education or lower, up to 21.16% reported experiencing unwanted sex. This happened to 13.36% of women with a college/vocational education and 6.29% of women with a university degree or higher. Approximately 15% of women in rural areas and 10.22% of women in urban areas reported having experienced unwanted sex.

### DOUBLE STANDARDS REGARDING SEX STILL EXIST

The survey also explored perceptions and attitudes regarding sexuality, marriage, and family. Note that this section has been completed by the entire survey population by asking participants to choose whether they agree, partially agree or disagree with 11 statements reflecting double standards which tolerate men's freedom in sexual activities and blame women for the same conducts. The Likert-scale was used with the following rating choices: 0: disagree;

1: partially agree; 2: Agree. Total score and mean for all 11 statements was then calculated. The higher the score the more the person holds prejudice.

Results presented in Table 6.3 is a notable demonstration of the double standards regarding the sexuality of men and women. The surveyed population held higher moral and sexual standards for women and reported that women should be sexually naïve and passive in relation to men. The statement women "must preserve virginity until marriage" received greater support than the same statement applied to men. It was also agreed that while women must be "innocent and naïve about sex", that men must be "knowledgeable and experienced" about sex. Participants were also far less likely to endorse the statement that it is acceptable for women to have sex without love or that it is acceptable for women to have extramarital sex.

Overall, men and women diverged in their opinions on eight out of the 11 statements. However, it was also clear that women held stricter attitudes towards other women. For example, women were more likely to agree with the statements, "must preserve virginity until marriage," "women must be innocent and naïve about sex", and "women should not ask their husbands for sex". Conversely, women tend to disagree with the statements that "it is acceptable to have extramarital sex" for both genders, and that "one can have sex without love" for both genders.

**Table 6.3: Men and women's perception of sex**

	All Mean (SD)	Men Mean (SD)	Women Mean (SD)	p
1. Women need to keep their virginity until marriage	1.78 (0.51)	1.71 (0.58)	1.86 (0.42)	< 0.001
2. Men need to keep their virginity until marriage	1.46 (0.74)	1.39 (0.76)	1.54 (0.70)	< 0.001
3. Women should not show that they are sexually experienced	1.44 (0.75)	1.37 (0.77)	1.52 (0.73)	< 0.001
4. Men should know about sex and be sexually experienced	1.23 (0.51)	1.23 (0.52)	1.22 (0.50)	0.690
5. It is acceptable that men can have sex outside of marriage (adultery)	0.20 (0.54)	0.25 (0.58)	0.16 (0.48)	<0.0001
6. It is acceptable that women can have sex outside of marriage (adultery)	0.06 (0.29)	0.07 (0.33)	0.04 (0.26)	<0.0001
7. Men can have casual sex without love	0.29 (0.61)	0.32 (0.63)	0.26 (0.59)	<0.0001
8. Women can have casual sex without love	0.14 (0.44)	0.17 (0.47)	0.12 (0.40)	<0.0001
9. The wife should satisfy the husband's sexual demand to keep a happy family	1.64 (0.60)	1.64 (0.60)	1.65 (0.60)	0.3175
10. Women should not take the lead in bed, asking their husbands to follow their sexual requests	1.28 (0.80)	1.22 (0.80)	1.33 (0.79)	<0.0001
11. It is unacceptable for women having children without a husband	1.09 (0.86)	1.08 (0.85)	1.10 (0.87)	0.2664

Next, the medians of the 11 statements were calculated to identify who hold double standards with regards to men's and women's sexuality. Findings showed that, with the median of 11, in the range between 0 as the lowest point and 22 as the highest point, up to 51.3% of the surveyed population belong to the group harboring

double standards regarding sex among men and women (with the total score between 12 and 22). Double standards are more prevalent among those who are older and with a lower level of education, living in rural areas, living in the south, having low incomes, who are farmers and manual laborers.

### Box 6.1: Men have such rights...

*Young women who have children without a husband might endure a lot of blame and judgement. But people say nothing about men who have children outside of wedlock. Men have such rights while women have to suffer judgement everywhere. (Male focus group, Hung Yen)*

*A man can have several wives, but a righteous woman should only have one husband. This saying has been passed down for so many generations. So men can go on having affairs here and there. But if women were like that then their husbands would kick them out immediately. (Female, 47 years old, Hung Yen)*

*When a husband wants sex, even if the wife is not in the mood, she has to compel. On the contrary, when the wife wants sex but her husband does not compel, she has to accept it. Women tend to think it is embarrassing for them to ask for sex. (Female focus group, Ho Chi Minh City)*

## FAMILY PLANNING

This survey also inquired about contraception methods used during intercourse among the sexually active, married population. The questionnaire listed 11 contraception methods and asked which the participants used when they were sexually active. Note that a person can use multiple methods.

As presented in Table 6.4, approximately 60% of currently married people reported using birth control methods. They were then asked to name the methods they use among the 11 family planning methods listed below.

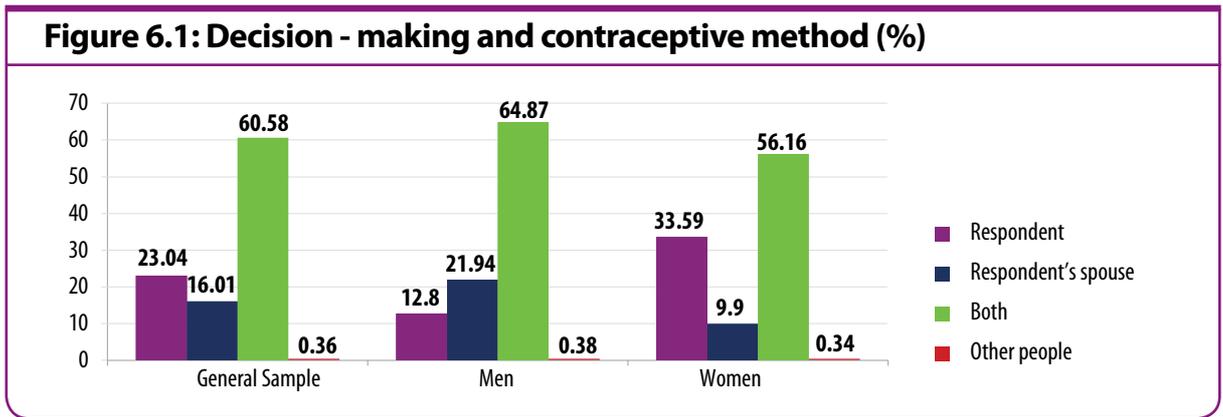
On average, the five most popular contraception methods among this population included intrauterine devices (26.75%), male condoms (10.49%), contraceptive pills (9.72%), withdrawal (4.89%), and calendar of the menstrual cycle (3.17%). Note

that over 40% of the sexually active subpopulation did not use any of the contraception methods. In addition, 5 out of 11 contraception methods were endorsed differently ( $p < 0.05$ ) between genders, while the other half were endorsed similarly. The methods most likely to be endorsed by men included male condoms and sterilization of the spouse; the methods more likely to be endorsed by women included calculation of the menstrual cycle, sterilization of self, and not having sex.

Survey participants who reported using any contraceptive method were also asked to indicate who in their relationship was primarily responsible for decision-making regarding contraceptive use. On average, about 61% of the surveyed population who were married, sexually active, and had ever used

**Table 6.4: Contraceptive methods employed**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Birth control pills	9.72	9.62	9.84
Male condoms	10.49	11.92	8.92
Female condoms	0.18	0.27	0.09
Calculating ovulation dates	3.17	2.35	4.06
Withdrawal method	4.89	4.23	5.61
Birth control shot	0.66	0.62	0.71
Emergency morning-after pills	0.36	0.31	0.42
Vaginal rings	26.75	27.18	26.28
Wife/husband being sterilized	2.21	3.41	0.90
Respondent being sterilized	3.12	0.70	5.77
Abstain from sex	0.24	0.03	0.46
Other methods	0.78	0.92	0.62
Not using any methods	40.33	41.86	38.66



any of the listed contraception methods reported that the decision was a joint decision within the relationship. However, it was clear that men were less engaged than women in the decision-making process regarding contraceptive use. Men were more likely to report it was their spouse who was responsible for the decision-making while women were more likely to report that they, themselves, were responsible for the decision-making. Around 13% of men and 34% of women reported that they decided on the contraception. Approximately 22% of men reported that their wives were the ones to decide but only 10% of women reported that their husbands were the ones to decide. (See Figure 6.1).

Even though the information in Figure 6.1 indicates that women seem to have more power

in deciding which contraceptive methods to use, in reality, their power is mostly confined to choosing among female methods. Table 6.5 shows that, while 72.54% of those who reported using contraceptive methods used a female method and only 32.39% reported using a male method. Thus, it is obvious that women are the ones in charge of employing suitable birth control methods.

Socio-demographic variables have relatively strong impacts on the use of contraceptive methods. For example, in Table 6.5, the rate of using female contraceptive methods increases with age but decreases with the level of education. Those of older age with lower levels of education tend to rely more on female contraceptive methods. In other words, these women bear more

**Table 6.5: Differences in employing birth control methods according to age and level of education (%)**

	All	Age			Education				
		18-24	25-44	45+	Elementary or lower	Middle school	High school	College/Vocat. school	University or higher
Contraceptive methods for men	32.39	34.04	33.23	30.08	23.33	30.91	36.54	42.61	46.64
Contraceptive methods for women	72.54	71.63	71.36	74.81	80.00	74.21	68.63	63.04	60.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>3788</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>2353</b>	<b>1294</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>1679</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>268</b>

responsibilities when it comes to family planning. Men of a younger age with higher levels of education are more likely to share family planning responsibilities with their spouse.

Women in rural areas, living in central and southern Vietnam, and women belonging to ethnic minorities bear the most responsibility when it comes to family planning. On the contrary, men in urban areas, northern Vietnam and of Kinh ethnicity are more likely to share the load of family planning.

Women with low income whose work is farming or manual labor are not as likely as those with higher income whose occupations are workers or professionals and management to have the responsibility of family planning shared by their partners.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This section presents the research findings on domestic violence among the currently married population. Problems of domestic violence explored in the survey include 16 types of domestic violence happening in the last 12 months, including forms of controlling one another by the spouses and resolution of family conflicts.

### THE MOST COMMON VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE ARE WOMEN

To explore the reality of domestic violence among the currently married population, the questionnaire listed 16 types of family conflicts and domestic violence, asking whether the participants

ever experienced each of them within the last 12 months. Note that a person can experience and report multiple types of conflicts and violence.

According to the research on domestic violence by the General Statistics Office in 2010, the percentage of women reporting having experienced physical violence in the last 12 months was 6% and those who experienced sexual violence accounted for 4%. Those who experienced mental violence accounted for 25%.

To form an overall picture, we categorized 16 types of violence into three sub-groups: i) physical and mental violence; ii) sexual violence; and iii) economic violence. Results showed that, physical and mental violence were the most common with 44.85% of women and 41.51% of men reported having experienced by their spouse at least one of these types of violence during the last 12 months. Those groups of people aged 22-44, with a low level of education, ethnic minorities, living in urban areas in southern Vietnam, and working as manual laborers tend to report experiencing more physical and mental violence than other groups.

Economic violence happens to 9.58% of women and 5.85% of men. Young women with low levels of education, ethnic minorities, those living in urban areas in southern Vietnam, and who are manual laborers tend to suffer from economic violence more than women of other groups.

Sexual violence happens to 4.2% of women and 4.72% of men. All forms of sexual violence are more likely to happen to women; except being banned from sex by spouse and being blamed for sexual incapacity that are reported to happen more to men. The groups of young women with primary education or lower, ethnic minorities in



Women often **choose to keep silent** due to the fear that they could lose more if they speak out.

southern Vietnam, and manual laborers tend to experience sexual violence more than women of other groups.

Gender difference was observed in 9 out of 16 forms of domestic violence listed ( $p < 0.05$ ). Most of

the violence, including physical and mental abuse, economic abuse and sexual violence, is endured by women. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to report financial blockage and “sex ban” by the spouse. See Table 6.6 for summaries.

**Table 6.6: Domestic Violence**

Forms of violence in the last 12 months	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	p
Physical and mental abuse				
<i>Beaten by spouse</i>	4.52	2.44	6.71	0.008
<i>Insulted by spouse</i>	23.88	20.74	27.18	0.006
<i>Spouse initiated “cold war”</i>	29.76	29.30	30.25	0.271
<i>Kicked out from home by spouse</i>	1.55	0.83	2.30	0.019
<i>Spouse threatened to divorce</i>	1.82	1.41	2.25	0.013
<i>Threatened to be killed by spouse</i>	0.58	0.49	0.67	0.500
Economic abuse				
<i>Prohibited from work by spouse</i>	3.75	2.11	5.48	< 0.001
<i>Financial blockage by spouse</i>	2.67	3.33	1.98	0.016
<i>Assets taken away by spouse</i>	0.62	0.46	0.79	0.293
<i>Assets destroyed by spouse</i>	2.23	1.03	3.49	0.004
Sexual violence				
<i>Forced/unwanted sex</i>	1.44	0.85	2.05	0.096
<i>Forced to watch porn with spouse</i>	0.36	0.36	0.37	0.970
<i>Blamed for sexual incapacity</i>	0.97	1.05	0.89	0.644
<i>Prohibited from contraception use</i>	0.62	0.58	0.66	0.720
<i>Experienced spouse’s extra-marital affair</i>	0.79	0.65	0.94	0.545
<i>Banned from having sex with spouse</i>	1.92	2.97	0.82	0.001

As presented in Box 6.2 below, male participants in a focus group discussion in Ho Chi Minh City commented that banning husbands from sex is the only way a woman could negotiate, as there is no other negotiation alternative. The participants

noted that women often choose to keep silent due to the fear that they could lose more if they speak out. They also noted that enduring sexual violence in silence is common for women from all social strata.

### Box 6.2: Sex “embargo” – the women’s agency

*I work with poor people in an area where there are many street vendors. I see that sex can be a “means” for women to negotiate with their husbands. One day I overheard a conversation among a couple who run a noodle shop on the street corner. The husband perhaps did something that upset his wife. She shouted at him “Forget about touching me tonight.” I know for many women like her, such an “embargo” is the only way that they can preserve their power over their husband.*

*Yes, sexual violence can happen to everyone but it is little known. Women, regardless of whether they are farmers or intellectuals, all often endure such types of violence in silence. But once it happens to the latter, it could be very dramatic. This happened to a close friend of mine. They were both university lecturers and always looked like a very happy couple. But in fact she suffered from sexual violence from her husband for years to the degree that she had to sleep in a different room to stay away from her husband. This lasted for years. But she did not dare to leave him, although she knew that he had a mistress somewhere and had a child with her. She couldn’t bear the shame. She told me “I don’t want my children to have a broken family”.* (Male Focus group discussion, Ho Chi Minh City).

## SOLUTION TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – LET IT PASS

To understand solutions adopted to resolve domestic violence, surveyed participants were asked to choose 1 out of 10 options categorized into three groups: i) Let it pass; ii) Peacemaking; iii) Legal measures; and iv) Not able to resolve. Most cases of violence were let pass (98.57%), a small percentage were resolved (1.05%), and a very small percentage was unresolved (0.38%). The independent variables do not have any impacts. In other words, domestic violence is perceived as a private matter and should be hidden behind closed doors. The results align with the findings from Vietnam General Statistic Office 2010 and other studies.

In the qualitative research, some people shared that women were not encouraged to report domestic violence. In the cases that women reported to have been assaulted by the husbands, they became not only the victims of domestic violence but also the victims of social stigma and prejudice. This explains why interventions by legal authorities were limited, including incidences when violence was prolonged and serious.

### Box 6.3: “Shame on you if you put your husband to shame”

*I think that if you are hit by your husband, if you report your husband then you are an ignorant person. Your husband doesn’t hit you for no reason. Why does he hit you? You need to look within yourself for a reason, why do you need to go report him? That is not fair. If you are hit by your husband and you go report him, your family will definitely fall apart. An old proverb says “Shame on you if you put your husband to shame”* (Male focus group, Hung Yen)

*I have submitted reports so many times but the police have yet to resolve the matter. Only the commune authority came to talk to him. He was unafraid, saying “Later I’ll go to the commune to kill you two.”* (Female focus group, Hung Yen)

### Box 6.4: Husbands are men so they have the right to violence...

*Men, whether drunk or sober, beating their wives is not a problem. You can lecture them then forget about it. But for those women, if they are exasperated, can't take it any longer and they retaliate even just a little, it is considered utterly unacceptable. Because of this men always take this perception to their advantage. (Male, 57 years old, Long An).*

*I'm too used to the scene of men beating women. That's why when men beat women, people will think the women are deserved to be beaten. They criticize [the men] but only a little. They still perceive that it was largely the fault of the women. But if women beat men, all bad things will be blamed on the women rather than the men. These are the two obvious views. (Female, 43 years old, Ho Chi Minh City)*

*I can't ever tolerate that. Nobody would tolerate that. Husbands beating their wives are still acceptable, but nobody would accept a violent wife. (Question: Why?) Because a woman should always be loving and caring toward her husband. What kind of woman would beat her husband? (Male, 30 years old, Ho Chi Minh City).*

*Men have always been the breadwinners of the family, they have strength and power, so they can be violent... In other people's eyes, the wives need to be gentle, feminine. Nobody would imagine a violent, ferocious wife. That's why when a wife beats her husband, people think it is a serious issue, but not vice versa. (Female, 26 years old, Long An)*

*There are not many wives who beat their husbands, but once that happens they are going to be very "famous". But if husbands beat their wives, it's completely normal. (Question: Why is it normal? Aren't all beatings the same?) It's like that here in our town. Men can be like this and like that, but women cannot. They say women don't have the right to. If you are men, you always have the right to. (Female, 38, Ha Noi)*

*We need to endure. People say women need to endure no matter what, endure so that the house can be harmonious. If we complain, people will think it is because we talk too much that the husband beats us. (Female focus group, Hung Yen)*

### **VIOLENT WOMEN ARE "HEINOUS", MEN ARE VIOLENT "BECAUSE THEY ARE THE HUSBANDS, THEY HAVE THAT RIGHT"**

As discussed earlier, double standards are still very common when it comes to men's and women's conduct, especially regarding the issue of domestic violence. In the qualitative research, when asked about their perception of wives who abused their husbands, most of those interviewed contended that it was "unusual" and unacceptable. Many

people believe that if men abuse their wives, it must be the fault of the wives and the men have the right to "teach" their wives a lesson. In many people's perspectives, women who are violent with their husbands are intolerable because their responsibility is to take care and offer affection to their husbands. In the community, it is a matter of fact that men beat their wives. If women beat their husbands, it is detestable. The double standards lead to the commonality of domestic violence against women. (See Box 6.4).

## MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE CONTROLLED, DUE TO WOMEN'S ANXIETY FOR FAMILY'S STABILITY

Apart from the conventional issue of violence, the survey also explored different forms of control that are also considered violence. Among eight forms of control – except for the matter of appearance such as clothes, makeup, sexual relations and the use of contraceptive methods from which women are more likely to suffer, men reported being controlled more in the other 5 matters as shown in Table 6.7. Generally, 35.27% of men reported having

experienced at least a form of control by their wives, while 30.27% of women have had similar experiences with their husbands. Control imposed by spouses decreases as individuals get older. It's worth noting that those with a university education or higher, living in urban areas, of ethnic minorities, in southern Vietnam with the highest income, and skilled workers are those who are mostly likely to be controlled. (See Table 6.7 for summaries).

**Table 6.7: Being controlled by spouse (%)**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Checking computers, diaries, mobile phones, emails and personal correspondence	10.9	12.72	7.32
Is permitted to see/interact with certain people only	9.91	10.55	9.23
Is permitted to spend a certain amount of money	9.06	12.01	5.95
Want to know where you are	17.57	20.09	14.92
Not letting you go to certain places	11.11	13.44	8.65
Only give permission to dress up/wear makeup in certain ways	5.65	3.32	8.11
Want you to have sex in certain ways	3.96	3.69	4.25
Want you to use certain birth control methods	6.43	6.32	6.54

Initially, these questions were designed with the assumption that they would provide evidence of women being controlled more often. That is why we were surprised with the findings, since it did not fit other findings regarding domestic violence in Vietnam. However, the qualitative research has helped explain this seemingly ironic finding. According to the participants, the fact that men

reported being controlled by their wives illustrated the anxiety or worries of women in today's social context when there is a big change of social values. The patterns of men having affairs, drinking alcohol or abusing substances have been a reality threatening the stability and well-being of many families. This was demonstrated in the excerpt presented in the Box 6.5.

### Box 6.5: Being a woman means being a sufferer

*There are very few women who are violent in a physical sense ... it's very rare. But violence in other forms, like financial control, is still domestic violence. Women tend to engage in more in that stuff. Controlling one's social contacts is also a form of violence. It makes one stressed, uncomfortable. I think women tend to fall into those cases. (Female, 43 years old, Ho Chi Minh City).*

*Nowadays women may have a more cushy life than before but also worry sick about whether their husbands have affairs or not. But that is not the worst, having a husband who is addicted to drugs, now that's miserable. In my neighborhood there are some that got married to drug addicts, now in the house there is not even a thing –all the valuables got sold, scooters, even their children's bicycles. Doesn't matter where the money was hidden, the husbands always found it. If the wives don't give the money, they can even get beaten. Even those few sets of clothes they have they have to hide for fear of them being sold by the husband. (Female, 44 years old, Hanoi)*

*To be frank, men nowadays are often very outrageous. After work, they go for drinks, hang out with friends until late. There are 7 days a week but they come home late on 6 days. When coming home, they are drunk, if not exhausted, only rush to their bed, they don't even bother to wash themselves, let alone care for their family. No wonder the wives are all hot and bothered, wanting to control. The younger the men, the worse the problem is. Women have to suffer a lot, honestly speaking. (Male, 45 years old, Hanoi)*

## FACTORS AFFECTING GENDER RELATIONS IN SEX

Table 6.8 summarizes the effects of socio-demographic factors upon gender equality in the sexual relationships of men and women, in particular the initiation of sexual activities between husband and wife<sup>6</sup>, sexual satisfaction and experiences of sexual violence. In logistic regression models, these issues are the dependent variables while the independent variables are sex, gender, inequitable perceptions on women's and men's sexuality, age, educational level, place of residence, region, job/occupation and individual's income. In each model, we will combine one independent variable and the sex variable, and keep the rest of the independent variables the same to measure the effect of the independent variable on gender equality in sexual relationships.

Regarding initiation of sexual activities within couples, in Model 1A, men initiate sex 23 times more than women with the same characteristics such as age, education, region and occupation (95%CI: 23.05 – 23.71,  $p < 0.001$ ). Men with inequitable gender attitudes on sexuality or having double sexual standards often take initiative in sex more than men with equitable gender attitudes.

In terms of age (Model 2A), men over 45 years of age are those who initiate sex the most, and men in the age group of 24-35 are those who initiate sex the least. However, in general, men still initiate sex 23 times more than women do. Especially in the young age group of 18–24 years old, men initiate sex 32 times more than women do.

<sup>6</sup> *Initiating sex in this context means the person who initiates sex doesn't care about the feeling of his/her partner*



The **lower the education** men attain the more likely they are to be the one to initiate sex.

Similarly, men with an education from primary school or lower initiate sex 26.64 times more than women with the same educational level (95%CI: 18.97996 - 37.40343). The lower the education men attain the more they likely they are to be the one to initiate sex (Model 3A). The demographic and social independent variables in the models explain more than 27% ( $R^2 > 27\%$ ) of the changes of the dependent variables. This means that the initiation of sex is strongly associated with independent variables. However, the differences regarding initiation of sex have statistical significance mainly for male groups. In particular, rural men initiate sex more often than urban men (Model 4A), and men in the south initiate sex more than men in the centre and the north (Model 5A).

In terms of sexual satisfaction, men have a higher prevalence of satisfaction with their sex lives than women do (1.5 times higher) (95%CI: 1.07-1.96,  $p < 0.05$ , Model 1B). This may be associated with the high proportion of men who initiate sex as compared to women (as discussed above). People with inequitable gender attitudes on sex have a lower satisfaction rate than people with equitable gender attitudes, though this difference is not statistically significant. In other models, there is an association between education and satisfaction of both men and women. The higher the education they attain the more satisfied they are with their sex life. In particular, women with a university or higher education are more satisfied with their

sex life than men with the same education. An association between place of residence and sexual satisfaction of men and women is also detected, however, it is statistically significant for rural areas, but not for urban areas.

Regarding sexual violence, women suffer violence twice as much as men do. The group of respondents with inequitable gender attitudes on sexuality reported a slightly higher rate of experiencing sexual violence compared to the group of respondents with more equitable gender attitudes (Model 1C). Women with lower education, working as a manual laborer or farmer tend to experience sexual violence more than other groups and this association is statistically significant. Young, rural women are more likely to experience sexual violence, however the association is not statistically significant. It is worth noting that in Model 7C women in the highest income group and the near-poor group are more likely to be victims of sexual violence than women in the lowest income group. This difference, however, is not statistically significant. In the models on experience of sexual violence, independent variables do not have a strong influence on the dependent variables; independent variables in those models explain from 3.03 to 3.55 the changes of the dependent variables. This can be a reflection of the reality that other studies on domestic violence found that all women, regardless their background, can be victims of domestic violence.

**Table 6.8: The effects of socio-demographic factors upon gender equality in sexual relationship of men and women**

Variables	Take the initiate to have sexual activities	Satisfied with sexual life	Have experienced sexual violence
	<i>Model 1A</i>	<i>Model 1B</i>	<i>Model 1C</i>
Sex (female=ref.)	23***	1.45*	0.56**
Inequitable gender attitudes (equitable gender attitudes = ref.)	1.07***	0.98	1.07*
Other independent variables ...			
R2	27.42	2.03	3.55
	<i>Model 2A</i>	<i>Model 2B</i>	<i>Model 2C</i>
Age groups			
<i>Female 18-24 (ref)</i>			
<i>Male 18-24</i>	32.05***	NA	NA
<i>Male 25-34</i>	23.61***	2.62	0.52
<i>Male 35-44</i>	27.31***	1.26	0.31*
<i>Male 45+</i>	35.30***	1.14	0.39*
<i>Female 25-34</i>	1.51	1.11	0.88
<i>Female 35-44</i>	1.31	1.09	0.75
<i>Female 45+</i>	1.26	0.82	0.55
Other independent variables ...			
R2	27.09	2.04	3.07
	<i>Model 3A</i>	<i>Model 3B</i>	<i>Model 3C</i>
Education levels			
<i>Female with primary or lower (ref)</i>			
<i>Male with primary or lower</i>	26.64***	1.79*	0.46*
<i>Male with secondary</i>	16.94***	2.68***	0.30***
<i>Male with high school</i>	13.36***	3.46***	0.31***
<i>Male with college/vocational training</i>	10.07***	2.00	0.70
<i>Male w. university or higher</i>	12.65***	4.84*	0.29
<i>Female with secondary school</i>	0.72	1.80*	0.62*
<i>Female with high school</i>	0.65	2.73**	0.48*
<i>Female with college/vocational training</i>	0.92	2.04	0.75
<i>Female with university or higher</i>	0.616	6.40*	0.12*
Other independent variables			
R2	27.23	2.61	3.47
	<i>Model 4A</i>	<i>Model 4B</i>	<i>Model 4C</i>
Urban-rural			
<i>Female rural (ref)</i>			
<i>Male urban</i>	18.44***	1.36	0.54*
<i>Male rural</i>	20.9***	1.77**	0.5**
<i>Female urban</i>	0.71	1.22	0.81
Other independent variables			
R2	27.01	2.15	3.03

**Table 6.8: The effects of socio-demographic factors upon gender equality in sexual relationship of men and women (continue)**

Variables	Take the initiate to have sexual activities	Satisfied with sexual life	Have experienced sexual violence
	<i>Model 5A</i>	<i>Model 5B</i>	<i>Model 5C</i>
Area			
<i>Female in the North (ref)</i>			
<i>Male in the North</i>	23.53***	1.03	0.83
<i>Male in the Center</i>	25.98***	1.57	0.77
<i>Male in the South</i>	39.97***	1.92*	0.27***
<i>Female in the Center</i>	1.03	0.90	1.08
<i>Female in the South</i>	1.91**	1.21	0.92
<i>Other independent variables</i>			
R2	27.00	2.13	3.44
	<i>Model 6A</i>	<i>Model 6B</i>	<i>Model 6C</i>
Occupation			
<i>Female farmer (ref)</i>			
<i>Male manager/professional.</i>	14.61***	1.92	0.28*
<i>Male worker</i>	18.96***	1.37	0.62
<i>Male farmer</i>	28.82***	1.71*	0.64
<i>Male - service</i>	25.30***	1.28	0.42*
<i>Female management/prof.</i>	1.30	2.29	0.34*
<i>Female worker</i>	1.15	1.37	0.88
<i>Female - service</i>	1.15	0.79	1.2
<i>Other independent variables</i>			
R2	27.13	2.18	3.18
	<i>Model 7A</i>	<i>Model 7B</i>	<i>Model 7C</i>
Income quintile			
<i>Female the poorest (ref)</i>			
<i>Male 1<sup>st</sup> poorest</i>	29.19***	1.4	0.35*
<i>Male near poor</i>	31.59***	1.9*	0.91
<i>Male middle</i>	26.48***	1.46	0.67
<i>Male better-off</i>	30.57***	1.60	0.53
<i>Male richest</i>	23.07***	1.11	0.52
<i>Female near poor</i>	1.51	0.74	1.19
<i>Female middle</i>	1.16	1.02	1.23
<i>Female better-off</i>	1.32	2.22	0.6
<i>Female richest</i>	1.33	1.07	1.2
<i>Other independent variables</i>			
R2	27.04	2.41	3.20

Statistical significance: \* $<0.05$ ; \*\* $<0.01$ , \*\*\* $<0.001$

### **Box 6.6: “It’s because women do not dare to exercise their equal rights”**

*Talking about equality in sex, frankly speaking, there are still many women who do not dare to exercise their equal rights. For example, in my own case, I liked a woman. She liked me too but she never expressed her feelings to me. She waited for me to express them first. I asked her “Why didn’t you show me your true feelings?”. She said: “How can a stake run for a buffalo?”. She was afraid that people would say: “She is not a genuine woman, she’s promiscuous”. In my opinion, women should take initiative. Or at least she should leave the door half open, but not close it completely. Some women even lock themselves from the inside, and men have to break in. Indeed, most women do not dare to take the initiative in sex. I think these women do not know their rights. I like women who take the initiative. If a woman lies there passively, then I would surrender. This is also inequality, but we don’t know how to escape from this. These are rights that women have to embrace. But women don’t want to. (Why don’t women dare to take initiative in sex?) Perhaps they are afraid of rumors. (Only two people know, then where does the rumor come from?) That fear is probably already injected in women’s veins. In fact, many men want their wives to be modest. But when they go out, they prefer the girls who are bold and take the initiative. (Male focus group discussion, Ho Chi Minh City)*

In the qualitative research, many male participants said that they appreciate women who take initiative in intimate relations and they believed that women should exercise their rights to be equal to men. On the other hand, the participants agreed that women are not free to act in accordance to their feeling because they so deeply internalize the social norms which discourage women from enjoying sex. The box below displays quotes from a male focus group discussion in Ho Chi Minh City (see Box 6.6 for summaries).

As discussed in this chapter, the research results show that marriage continues to be of significant value to Vietnamese people. The majority of the surveyed people have married before or are currently married. For most of them love is the most important reason for their marriage. Also, most people decided to marry by themselves, consulting their parents first. There is a higher proportion of women who remain divorced and are widowed than men, while men have a higher prevalence of re-marriage than their female counterparts. More women than men take the initiative to get divorced, mainly because of

reasons related to gender inequality.

Regarding the sex life of married couples, men often take the lead in sex or, in other words, men are the ones who control the sex life of the couple. Women are less satisfied with their sexual relationships and reported more unwanted sexual experiences. Double sexual standards are still common. The pressure of family planning rests on women’s shoulders with more than two thirds of currently married couples practicing family planning relying on female methods. Nevertheless, men of a younger age and with higher educational levels are more likely to share family planning responsibilities with their spouse.

Women are the victims of most types of violence. It is still common for people to believe that it is natural for men to commit violence because they have that right. Men, however, reported being controlled in certain aspects of life, most likely because women have more concerns about the family’s well-being.

Factors such as age, education, place of residence, region, job/occupation and income have proven to influence gender equality in sexual relationships.



Age, education and place of residence factors have a strong effect on the degree of sex initiation. Older men, with lower levels of education, living in rural areas, in the south often are more likely to initiate sex. This means they are often the ones who have the power in sexual relationships between them and their wives. In contrast, younger men, with higher educations, living in urban areas in the north tend to be more equal in their sexual relationships, with a high rate reporting both husband and wife initiating sex. Education proves to have a strong effect on sexual satisfaction. The higher the education one has the more he/she reported satisfaction in sex; this is especially true for women with a university education or higher. Place of residence or social environment also influences the sexual satisfaction rate. While there is no considerable difference between men and women in urban areas, in rural areas men have a higher prevalence of sexual satisfaction than women do.

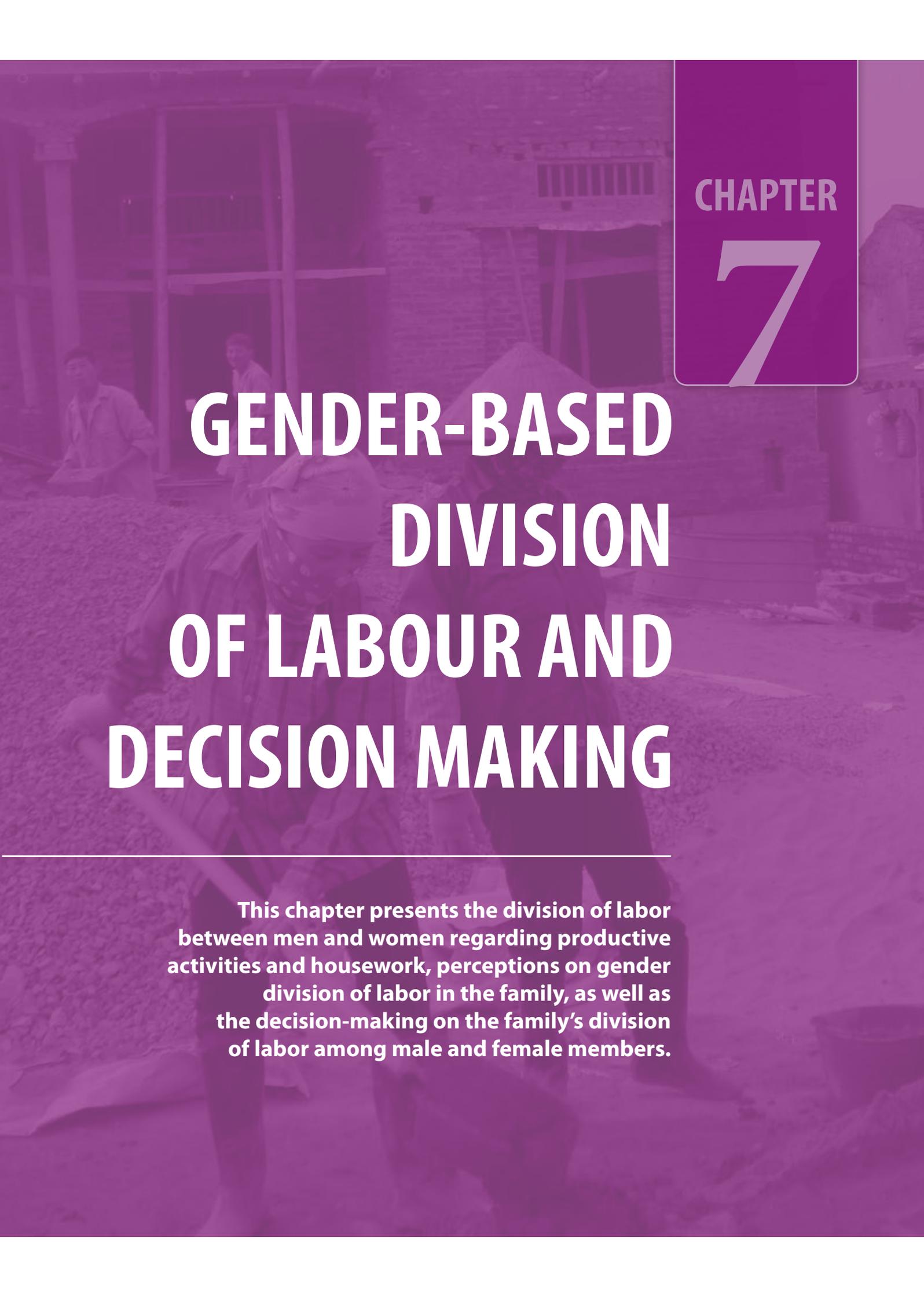
Education and occupation factors are closely associated with women's experience of sexual violence. Specifically, women with a low level of education, working as manual laborers or farmers have a higher risk of facing sexual violence. However, the unclear relation between other independent variables and the experience of sexual violence by women may suggest the reality that sexual violence could occur to any woman irrespective of her social status.

There is a clear association between age, education, place of residence, job/occupation, income and region regarding people's gender

perceptions. People with a low level of education, living in rural areas, doing manual work or farming, with a low income and living in the south often hold double standards on sexuality; in other words, they often have inequitable gender attitudes. In turn, gender perceptions can shape gender practices. People who hold double sexual standards and hold prejudices against women's sexuality are less likely to have an equal sexual relationship. They are often the ones who initiate sex, but if they are women, they tend to have less sexual satisfaction and suffer more sexual violence.



**Education** proves to have a strong effect on sexual satisfaction.



CHAPTER

# 7

# GENDER-BASED DIVISION OF LABOUR AND DECISION MAKING

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**This chapter presents the division of labor between men and women regarding productive activities and housework, perceptions on gender division of labor in the family, as well as the decision-making on the family's division of labor among male and female members.**

## MEN AND WOMEN'S DIVISION OF LABOR IN PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

The survey aims to examine men and women's participation in family production activities related to agriculture/forestry, animal breeding, fishery, handicrafts, or family services and business. The mean score was calculated for levels of participation of men or women or both in each production activity. The scores are assigned as follows: 1 - only men do; 2 - mainly men do; 3 - both men and women do; 4 - mainly women do; and 5 - only women do. The closer to 3 (the mid-value) the score is, the more that activity is shared between both genders. The lower to 3 the score is, the more the activity is carried out mainly or solely by men. Conversely, if the value is larger than 3 and the larger the value, it means that activity is done by mainly or solely by women.

### GENDER LABOR DIVISION IN AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY AND FISHERY ACTIVITIES

**Women engage in the majority of agricultural activities – from sowing and caring to harvesting, managing income-expenses and selling products. Men work mainly in land and are involved in land preparation and the use of pesticide.**

The activities of about 60% of households which engage in agricultural/forestry work include land preparation, sowing/transplanting, fertilizing, weeding, applying pesticides, harvesting, irrigating, caring, processing, selling products and managing expenses and incomes.

Data in Table 7.1 indicates the mean score of the division of labor among men and women for each of the above listed activities. It can be seen that men do most of the pesticide use (mean score 2.66) and land preparation (mean score 2.83). Women do most of the managing of income and

expenses, and the selling of products (mean scores are 3.63 and 3.4, respectively).

It is interesting that gender inequality is reflected in the three output activities, namely processing products, selling products and managing expenses/income (statistical significance at  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that in families engaging in agriculture/forestry, women take primary roles in product-output related activities.

**Table 7.1: Division of labor in agricultural activities**

	Mean score	p
1. Land preparation	2.83	0.444
2. Sowing/transplanting	3.26	0.323
3. Fertilizing	3.18	0.521
4. Weeding	3.32	0.149
5. Pesticide	2.66	0.192
6. Harvesting	3.11	0.617
7. Irrigation	2.99	0.956
8. Caring	3.16	0.123
9. Processing products	*3.25	*0.042
10. Selling products	*3.40	*0.003
11. Managing expenses/ income	*3.63	*0.000

\* $p < 0.05$

### GENDER DIVISION OF LABOR IN ANIMAL BREEDING AND FISHERY

Animal breeding and fishery activities mentioned in the survey include: buying breeding animals, preparing animal feed, feeding, disease prevention,



## Women are still responsible for **chores and caring work in the family.**

grazing, cleaning breeding facilities, buying and maintaining equipment, harvesting/catching, processing products, selling products and managing expenses/income.

Table 7.2 shows the mean score of each activity's division of labor among men and women which reflect significant gender inequality ( $p < 0.05$ ) within six activities: managing expenses/income (mean score 3.59); preparation of animal feed (mean score 3.39); feeding (mean score 3.38); selling products (mean score 3.35); cleaning breeding facilities (mean score 3.24); and animal grazing (mean score 3.24). Those scores are significantly higher than value 3, meaning women undertake those activities more than men do. Other activities show no statistically significant difference in division of labor between men and women ( $p > 0.05$ ). It can be said that women, more than men, are involved in animal breeding/fishery related activities.

**Table 7.2: Division of labor in animal breeding and fishery**

	<u>Mean score</u>	<u>P</u>
1. Buying breed	3.13	0.062
2. Preparation of feed	*3.39	*0.000
3. Feeding	*3.38	*0.002
4. Disease prevention	3.07	0.389
5. Animal grazing	*3.24	*0.011
6. Cleaning breeding facilities	*3.24	*0.003
7. Buying/maintaining equipment	2.96	0.750
8. Harvesting/catching	2.98	0.894
9. Processing products	3.13	0.448
10. Selling products	*3.35	*0.000
11. Managing expenses/income	*3.59	*0.000

\* $p < 0.05$

### **GENDER DIVISION OF LABOR IN FAMILY HANDICRAFT PRODUCTION/SERVICES/ BUSINESS**

#### **Men and women share work more equally in handicraft production/services/business compared to doing agricultural activities**

About 20% of households engaged in family handicraft/services/business. The activities include production, managing family's services/business; buying and maintaining production equipment; selling products or services; transporting goods/products and managing expenses/income.

Regarding the mean scores of division of labor between men and women for each activity, only the mean score for managing expenses/income has a significantly higher value than 3 (3.49) while the other five activities show no statistically significant value ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that men and women tend to share those activities (See Table 7.3).

**Table 7.3: Division of labor in handicraft production/doing services**

	<u>Mean score</u>	<u>P</u>
1. Production	2.96	0.828
2. Managing production or business/ or services	3.19	0.213
3. Buying and maintaining production equipment	2.99	0.972
4. Selling products or services	3.22	0.172
5. Transporting goods/products	2.84	0.122
6. Managing expenses/income	*3.49	*0.008

\* mean value is statistically significant from 3 (for both man and woman)

In general, division of labor seems more equally shared between men and women in households doing handicraft/services or business compared to those doing agriculture or animal breeding/fishery activities.

### GENDER DIVISION OF LABOR IN HOUSEWORK

#### Women are still responsible for chores and caring work in the family

Participation of men and women in housework is examined through 14 different typical responsibilities within the family: managing daily expenditure/income; going to the market to buy food; cooking; dishwashing; cleaning/tidying the house; washing clothes; handy work; caring for the sick/elderly/children in the house; picking up from school/work; going to wedding/funeral events; worshipping/visits (friends, sick persons); and representing the family at work and local government/the community.

Similarly, the mean score was calculated to measure the level of gender participation for each activity. The same calculation method above has been applied.

Results presented in Table 7.4 show the significant differences between genders in doing housework. There are only two activities which show no significant gender difference, which are going to wedding/funeral events and ancestor worshipping.

It can be appreciated that mainly men do the handy work in the family (fixing and maintaining family's equipment, with a mean score of 1.94) and also represent the family when working with the local government or community (mean score

2.7). Meanwhile, women take responsibilities of 10 other activities in the house. It is the woman in the family who does most of the housework related to preparing food, cleaning, caring activities (mean score >4), which include going to buy food in the market (mean score 4.18); cooking (mean score 4.12); dishwashing (mean score 4.14); washing, hanging, folding clothes (mean score 4.08); and cleaning the house (mean score 4.03).

**Table 7.4: Division of labor in doing housework**

	Mean score	P
1. Going to market to buy food	*4.18	*0.000
2. Dishwashing	*4.14	*0.000
3. Cooking	*4.12	*0.000
4. Washing, hanging, folding clothes	*4.08	*0.000
5. Cleaning and tidying up in the house	*4.03	*0.000
6. Managing expenditure/ income	*3.97	*0.000
7. Feast cooking (Worship or New Year occasion)	*3.58	*0.001
8. Care for the elderly, sick persons or children	*3.49	*0.000
9. Picking up children/family member from school/work	*3.25	*0.000
10. Visiting sick persons/friends	*3.12	*0.000
11. Wedding/funeral attendance	3.00	0.966
12. Worshipping	2.95	0.575
13. Representing the family in work with local government/community	*2.70	*0.000
14. Fixing/maintaining equipment in the house	*1.94	*0.000

\* mean value is statistical significant from 3 (for both man and woman)



To understand the results, the team estimated the amount of housework that men or women do among those listed housework activities that family members do on a daily basis. Housework activities are grouped into 3 categories: doing from 0-2 activities; doing from 3-4 activities and doing 5 activities or more.

Figure 7.1 illustrates clear differences in the amount of housework activities that men and women do in their family homes. In urban areas, more than 97% of women and 90% of men report that male members of their family only do 0-2 housework activities while 90.91% of women and 78.62% of men report that female members in their family do at least 5 housework activities or more.

Similarly, 97.02% of women and 89.53% of men living in rural areas report that males in their family mainly do only 0-2 housework activities; and 91.03% of women and 81.7% of men reported that females in their family do 5 activities or more. It is interesting that the proportion of men is always lower than that of women when reporting.

In general, the division of labor regarding housework clearly indicates gender inequality. Most types of housework are often considered “nameless” and unpaid work. It can be seen that women do a lot of the “nameless” work for their family but in many cases their efforts have not been fairly recognized. Housework is still undervalued by society. And women who do housework voluntarily are still considered to be dependent on others since their type of work brings no income. Many women are still discriminated against and abused by other family members as the work they do is invisible and unrecognized by other members. A study

conducted by ISDS in 2007 in Ha Tay estimated that a woman spent approximately 5 hours a day doing housework while men spent only about one or two hours on housework to “lend a hand/help out with housework”<sup>7</sup>. This research also tried to estimate the value of housework in cash terms and results showed that women contributed to housework with a value equivalent to 0.1 to 10 times the average income in the study area. Clearly, the time and energy that women spend on housework brings not only mental but also significant economic value<sup>8</sup>.

### **Box 7.1: Gender stereotypes regarding housework: Men work outside, women take care of housework**

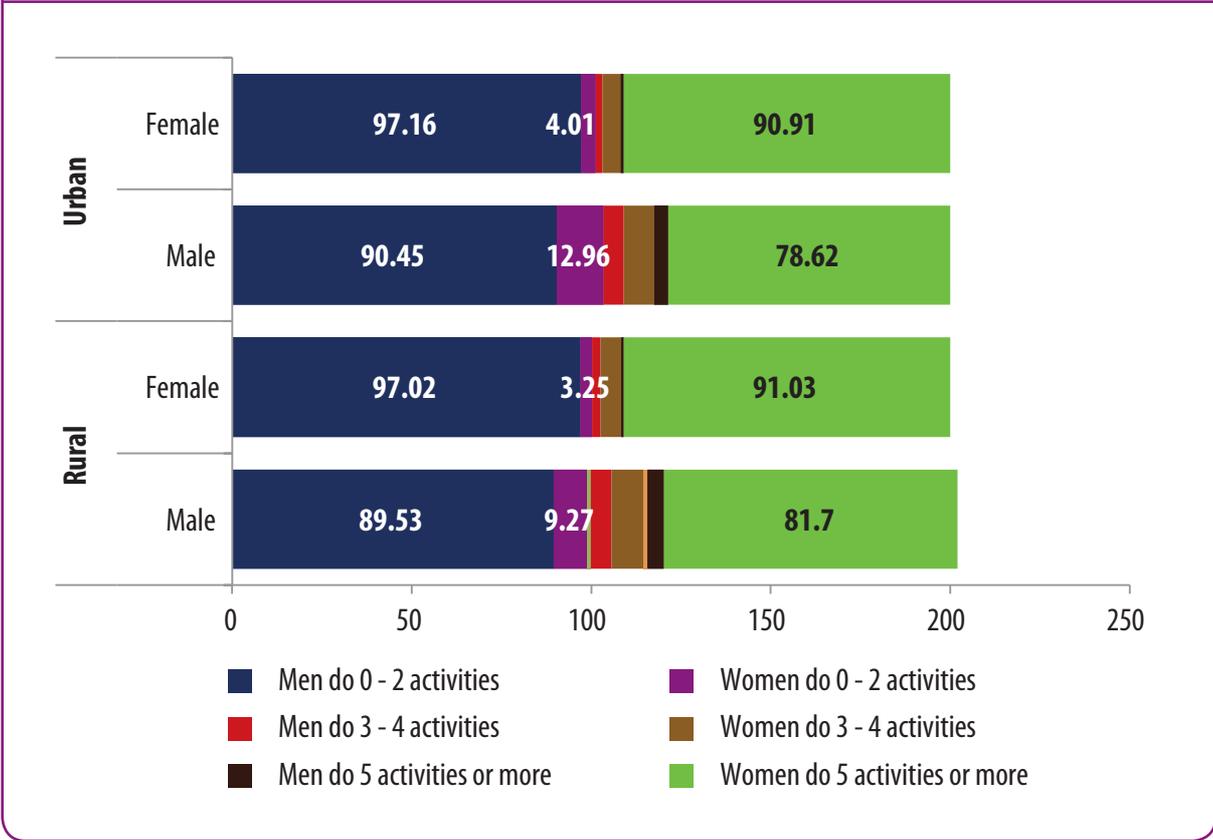
*It is certain that if a woman were in charge of such work as I do now, it would be hard for her to accomplish it. Because mixing both work in society and work in the family, she would not have enough time. After working hours a woman often goes home to her children, to cook and clean the house. Men like me only work outside the house, in society, if I have free time I can go outside, but my wife stays at home so her main task is doing housework. (Man, 49 years old, Hung Yen)*

*Men have better skills in doing big things, women have better skills in taking care of children and family. (Woman, 24 years old, Hung Yen)*

<sup>7</sup> ISDS & HealthBridge. “Economic contribution of women through housework”. Hanoi, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *ibis*.

**Figure 7.1: Number of housework activities that men and women do by rural/urban areas (%)**



Housework responsibilities are on women’s shoulders while men are responsible for paid work. Due to this “housework burden”, women cannot perform work as equally as men do in society.

**GENDER DIVISION IN RAISING CHILDREN**

**Women raising the children**

Traditionally, child raising is deemed by society to be women’s “innate task”. This survey aims to understand how parents provide care for their children and how they divide the work among themselves through 12 different caring tasks.

Results show a significant difference between husband and wife when engaging in caring activities for children.

Similarly to the above section, a calculation of the mean score for gender division of tasks was calculated. If the value of the mean score is close

to 3, caring tasks are shared between husband and wife. If the mean score is lower than 3, the survey respondent does more caring tasks, while if the score is higher than 3, the respondent’s spouse undertake more caring tasks.

Table 7.5 shows that men have a mean score value higher than 3 for all 12 listed tasks, this means that men engage less in caring for children. It seems that men are more involved in only one activity, which is to attend parental meetings at school.

In contrast, women have a mean score value of less than 3 in most of listed tasks. It means that women take charge of most of the tasks related to caring and raising their children, especially tasks that require direct care and are commonly related to caring for small children, such as feeding, bathing, washing, putting children to bed and staying at home to take care of a sick child. Data indicates that women are the main implementers of those tasks. Data from the survey confirms the reality that the

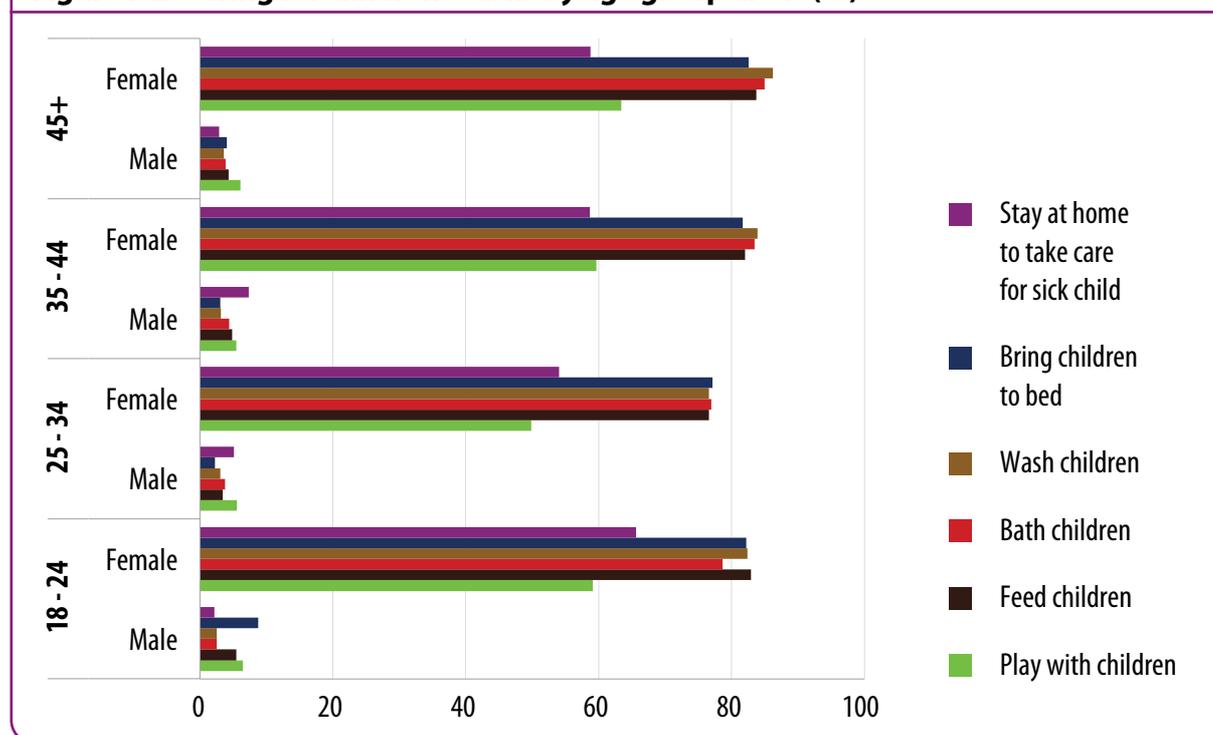
**Table 7.5: Gender division of labor in caring for children (mean score)**

	Men	Women	P
Playing with children	3.44	2.41	< 0.001
Feeding children	3.73	2.14	< 0.001
Bathing children	3.75	2.12	< 0.001
Cleaning	3.78	2.11	< 0.001
Putting children to bed	3.75	2.14	< 0.001
Preparing children for school	3.45	2.34	< 0.001
Picking up children to/from school	3.04	2.62	0.003
Attending parental meeting in school	2.93	2.60	0.014
Help children with homework	3.18	2.64	< 0.001
Stay at home to take care of sick child	3.46	2.40	< 0.001
Educating children	3.17	2.84	0.002
Taking children to recreation	3.19	2.87	0.006

burden of caring for the family, especially caring for children, is put on women’s shoulders. The division of labor in this case reflects the traditional cultural gender norms that assign the tasks of caring for children and doing housework to women as their “innate tasks”.

Regarding age groups, there are no significant differences – men of a young age group are also not quite involved in caring activities for their children, more gender equality is observed in this age groups regarding other activities (see Figure 7.2).

**Figure 7.2: Caring for children’s tasks by age group areas (%)**



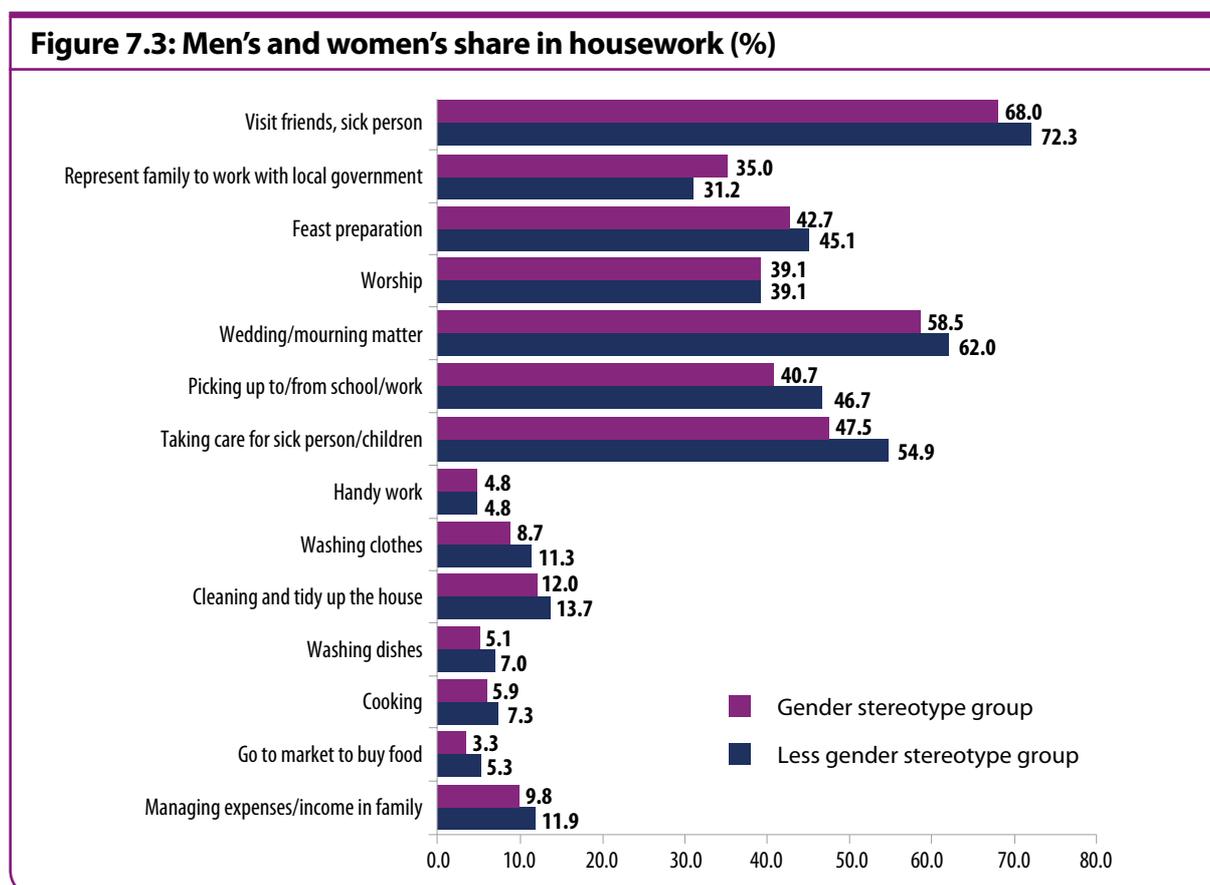
## GENDER ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIVISION OF LABOR IN THE FAMILY

### Respondents with less stereotypical attitudes towards gender share more work within the relationship.

It is undeniable that the burden of housework in the family is put on women’s shoulders. However, we examined if housework is better shared between male and female family members in the families with less prejudiced attitudes. Respondents are categorized into two groups – one group with prejudiced attitudes and the other group with less

prejudiced attitudes. The grouping is based on the calculation of respondents’ choice of answer whether they agree or disagree with gender stereotype statements provided in the survey questionnaires.

Results from analyzing the relationships between two of those groups indicate that in the Less Prejudice group, housework tasks are shared more between men and women. Although the difference is not large, it shows that a change in perception and attitudes can lead to a change in behavior, to a certain extent. (see Figure 7.3.)





From childhood girls **often do much more housework** than boys do.

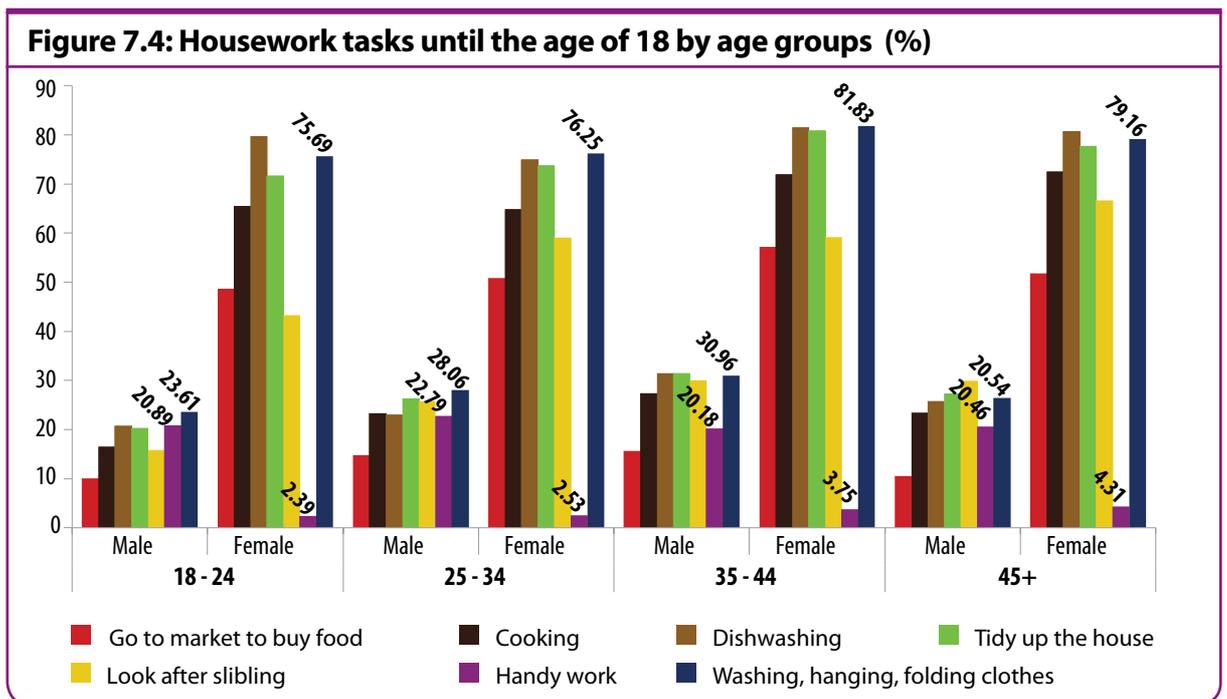
**Girls are more likely to get involved in housework than boys.**

Interestingly, the survey examines how men and women did housework when they were younger, including how household tasks were assigned by respondents' parents up to the age of 18 years old. The common housework tasks include: going to the market to buy food; cooking; dishwashing; cleaning and tidying up the house; looking after younger siblings; handy work; and washing/hanging/folding clothes.

In many families, parents try to educate their children by assigning them housework tasks in addition to encouraging their studies. However, results of the survey indicate that even in educating children to do housework, gender inequality is observed – girls often do much more housework

than boys do. Traditional gender norms are clearly reflected in the way parents educate their children – here it can be seen that boys receive handy work tasks such as fixing things in the house – more than girls do, and handy work is the only task that girls do least often. This pattern is exactly what is observed in the practice of sharing housework among respondents' families nowadays – fixing and maintaining equipment and things in the house are the only activities that men do more than women.

Gender differences in doing housework in childhood are illustrated in Figure 7.4. Apparently, from childhood girls often do much more housework than boys do. Interestingly, Figure 7.4 shows that men and women in young age groups (18-24 and 25-34) seem to do less housework than those in older age groups.



### **Box 7.2: Common gender stereotype: Men do the heavy work, women do the light work**

*Men often do the heavy jobs while light work is left for women to do, light things such as tidying up the house and cooking. (Man, 21 years old, Hung Yen)*

*Looking after children is the wife's task, and heavy work is mine. (Man, 34 years old, Hung Yen)*

*The husband is responsible for doing big things. The wife cannot take care of big things. I can only take care of the children in the family. And making the family become better off depends on the husband. (Woman, 53 years old, Hung Yen)*

## **DECISION MAKING ON GENDER DIVISION OF LABOR IN THE FAMILY**

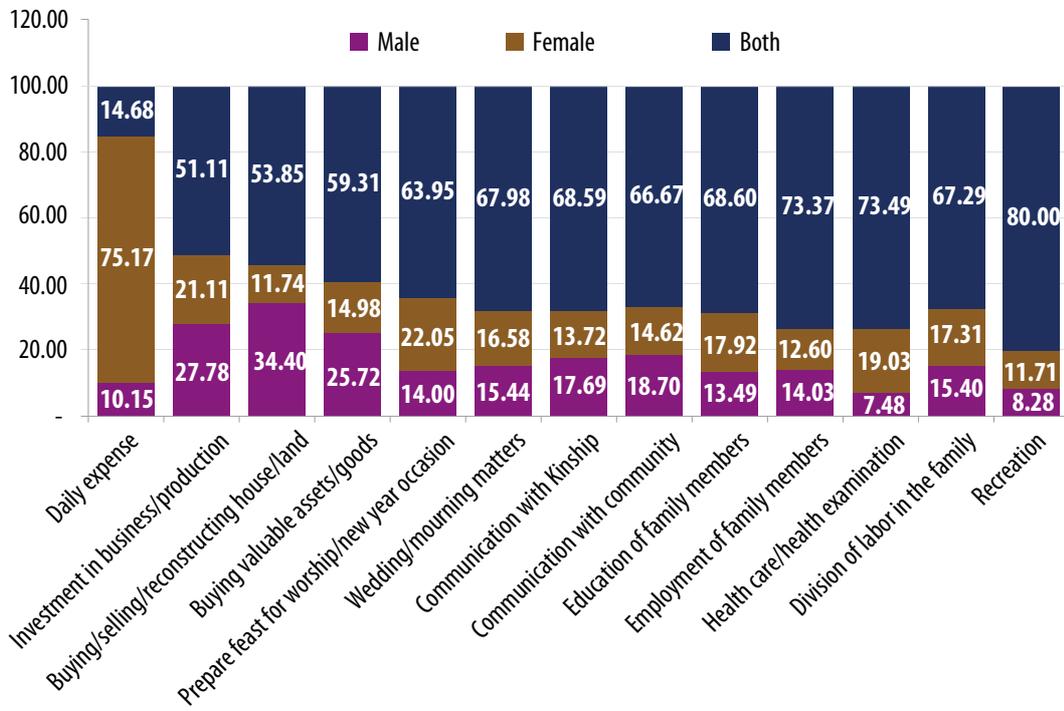
**The traditional norm “men build the house and women keep the house warm” or “women decide on small things, men decide on big things” remains common.**

Who is the main decision-maker over family issues is often the manifestation of power relations between genders in the family. The person who makes decisions in the house often also controls family resources. The survey listed 13 key family issues and respondents were asked to choose who decided on which matter in their family.

Figure 7.5 shows common decision makers over 13 listed family activities –either men or women or the decision is made by both. Among those listed, many activities have a high proportion of both genders making decisions, especially activities related to kin relationship, wedding/funeral attendance, or activities related to the future of family members, such as education or employment. Respondents report that women in their family make decisions mainly when it comes to activities related to “kitchen” matters such as decisions on daily expenses (75% report that women in their house decide on this matter compared to only 10% of those report that men do, and 15% report that both make the decision).

In addition, the proportion of women is significantly higher than that of men regarding decisions related to health care/health examination for family members. Those figures highlight the double role that women play in real life –being both productive and reproductive ones. In the majority of families, women are the ones who take on housework responsibilities and other reproductive tasks as well as being actively involved in production activities for income with men in the family.

In contrast, a higher proportion of men compared to women are reported to make decisions over family assets –such as buying/selling land or house, or reconstructing/building a house (approximately 34% report that men make these decisions compared to only 12% report that women do); investment for economic production/business (28% of men compared to 21% women); buying valuable goods for the family (26% report that men make these decisions compared to only 15% report women do); kinship matters (18% report that men make these decisions compared to only 14% report women do); and community matters (19% report men compared to 15% report women).

**Figure 7.5: Who makes decisions in the family (%)****Box 7.3: Common gender stereotype: Men are the pillar of the family**

Generally speaking, men are better than women at being the pillar of the family. Frankly speaking men earn money, they go outside to work to earn money and women take care of all kinds of family chores. I feel happier that way. (Women Focus group discussion, Long An)

When getting married, a woman always thinks that her husband is the pillar of the house, and he is the one that she relies on, man is a woman's support system. (Female, 51 years old, Hanoi)

Of course, there should be a master in each family. If there is a Party Secretary in the commune there is a master in the house, so he can gather every member of the house under his superior power. So when it comes to important matters in the house there should be a person that's a leader, to make things work. (Male, 64 years old, Hung Yen)

The master of the house can decide on his family matters. If the father is alive he takes the authority, he is the pillar. Mother and children are in the middle. If the father has passed away, the mother can decide on things. (Male, 56 years old, Hung Yen)



people who are young and who have a **higher level of education** have a better perception on gender equality of men's and women's roles in the family.

Another way of measuring the level of decision making of men and women over family matters is to calculate a mean score for decision making: 1- men make the decision; 2- both make the decision; and 3- women make the decision. So, the closer the mean score is to 2, the more gender equality is observed in decision making over certain family matters; the closer the mean score is to 1 indicates that men more than women make the decision over that matter. Conversely, the closer the mean score is to 3 indicates that women more than men make the decision over that family matter.

Table 7.6 shows the results of mean scores on gender-based decision making. Results indicate the same pattern. Men often make decisions over family assets: buying/selling the house or land, or renovating the house (mean score 1.76); buying valuable goods in the family (mean score 1.84); investing in business (mean score 1.93); and community relations (mean

score 1.96). Meanwhile, women tend to make decisions mainly in the daily family expenses (mean score 2.65) and health care (mean score 2.12).

However, it is observed that although men tend to make decisions over important family matters, the mean scores have values closer to 2. This implies that joint discussions and joint decisions between husband and wife are rather common in many families in this survey.

In addition, many mean scores that have a value close to 2 which may indicate the influence of a compensating factor – a proportion of women tend to report more women make decisions in the family while a proportion of men report the same.

The small value of *p* consistently presented over most of the activities indicates that there are significant differences in men's and women's answers on who makes decisions over the division of labor in the family. See more in the Table 7.6.

**Table 7.6: Decision over the division of labor in the family (mean score)**

	All	Men	Women
Daily expenses	*2.65	2.54	2.75
Health care/health examination	*2.12	1.98	2.25
Prepare feast for worship/new year occasion	2.07	1.93	2.21
Education of family members	2.05	1.91	2.19
Division of labor in the family	2.02	1.85	2.18
Wedding/mourning matters	2.01	1.86	2.15
Recreation	*2.03	1.92	2.15
Investment in business/production	*1.93	1.74	2.12
Employment of family members	1.99	1.87	2.11
Kinship relations	1.96	1.82	2.10
Community relations	*1.96	1.81	2.10
Buying valuable assets/goods	*1.84	1.73	2.00
Buying/selling/reconstructing house/land	*1.76	1.62	1.90

\* mean value away from 2 is statistical significant (for both man and woman)

### **Box 7.4: Common gender stereotype in decision-making: Men decide on big things, women decide on small things**

*...in some cases even when I disagree he still does it on his own, or sometimes he does it without discussing it with me, then I have to accept it, what can I do then? (Female, 55 years old, Hung Yen)*

*Men often make decisions in the family. For example, investing in buying livestock, or investing in the development of certain jobs, is mainly decided by men. It may be that women tend to yield the right to make decisions to men in the house. So, for a long time until today, small things, big things, decisions to change things are for the husband to decide. If he decides, the family follows and if he does not decide the wife may not dare to do it. So in many families it is the men that decide things. (Male, Hanoi)*

*When it comes to doing business there should be someone in charge, but if it is a big business then the man in the house should be the one who is responsible for the business. (Male, 50 years old, Hanoi)*

*People often say that men should always take care of big things. For example, men always have bigger dreams than women. Women often only think of small things. So women never dream big, only small. (Female, 45 years old, Hung Yen)*

Results of the qualitative study also indicate the common gender stereotype that men make decisions over “big things” in the family<sup>9</sup>. In-depth interviews revealed a rather common pattern that there are discussions among husband and wife over most of family matters, especially over important ones that are related to production activities for income, or children’s education and employment, etc.

## **PERCEPTION OF GENDER DIVISION OF LABOR IN THE FAMILY**

This section aims to explore the respondents’ perception and attitudes towards certain gender stereotyped statements which are

currently common in Vietnamese society. The mean score for each perception is measured through calculating respondents’ choice of answers –whether he/she agrees, partly agrees or does not agree with each of the given statements listed below:

1. Husband is the economic breadwinner/pillar of the family;
2. Wife is the economic breadwinner/pillar of the family;
3. Taking care of children and family members are women’s “born tasks”;
4. Men are the ones who make decisions regarding important family matters;
5. The “ideal” husband is the one who ensures a good economic life for his family;
6. The “ideal” wife is the one who take good care of her husband and children;

<sup>9</sup> ISDS. “Women economic choices – Qualitative research on gender norms in Vietnam”. Report to the World Bank. Hanoi, 2010.

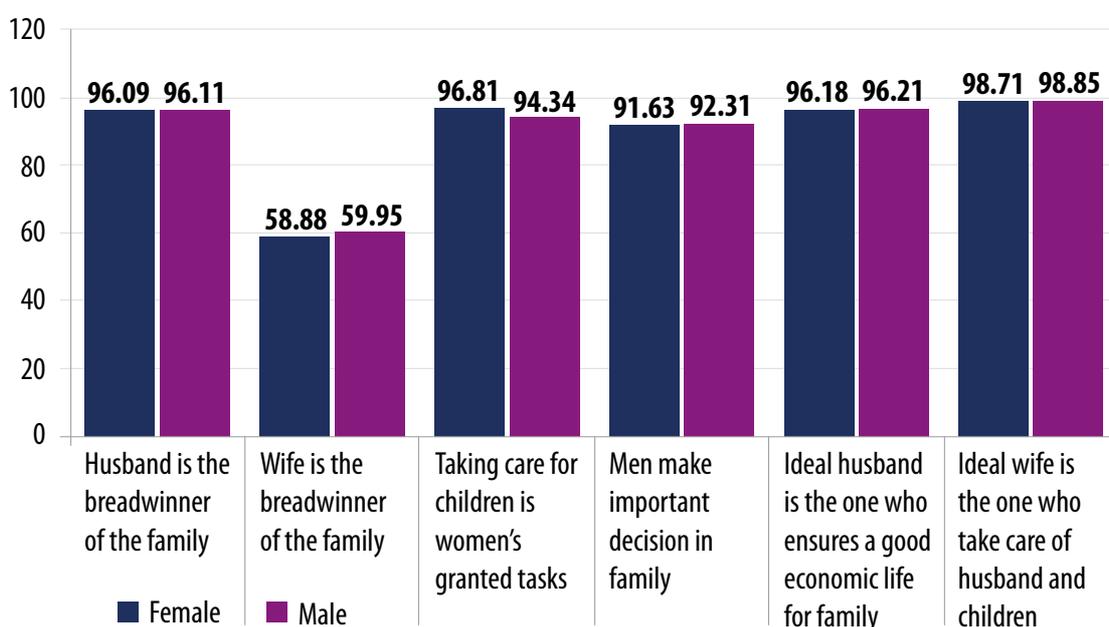
**Figure 7.6: Roles of husband and wife in the family (%)**

Figure 7.6 shows that proportions of both men and women who agree to those above statements are relatively high, except for the statement about the wife being the economic breadwinner of the family. This reflects a strong acceptance of traditional gender norms over men's and women's roles, especially regarding women's "innate task" of taking care of family and children, and of the ideal husband and ideal wife.

The calculation of the mean score for each statement is similar to the above section and it reveals similar results. According to the calculation, the score for agree equals 1; partly agree equals 2; and disagree equals 3. Therefore, if the value of the mean score is close to 1, it means that respondents share similar views given in the statement. If the value of the mean score is close to 3, respondents tend not to agree with the view given in the statement.

Table 7.7 shows that respondents (both men and women) tend to agree with five of the six statements listed above, with a high agreement tendency towards statements about the ideal wife (who take good care of husband and children – mean score 1.11); the ideal husband (who ensures a good economic life for the family – mean score

1.21); taking care of children and family is women's "innate task" (mean score 1.22); men are the main decision makers in the family (mean score 1.37); and the husband is the main breadwinner in the family (mean score 1.37).

Comparing mean scores of men and women in each statement, survey results show that men and women differ on views about women's responsibilities when caring for the family ( $p < 0.05$ ). Women tend to agree more than men with the statement that "caring for children and families is women's innate tasks" (mean score 1.15 of women compared to 1.28 of men).

It is noteworthy that when looking at age groups or levels of education, there are some differences, although they are not large: women and men in the younger age groups tend to hold less stereotypical views on gender than those in the older age groups. The same is observed for respondents who have higher levels of education – they have less prejudice than those who have lower levels of education, especially on the statement about women's "innate tasks" of caring for family and children and the statement on the decision making role of men. Thus, people who are young and who have a higher level

**Table 7.7: Perception about roles of husband and wife in the family (mean score)**

	All	Men	Women
The ideal wife is the one who take good care of her husband and children	1.11	1.12	1.1
The ideal husband is the one who ensures a good economic life for his family	1.21	1.22	1.2
Taking care of children and family members are women's "innate tasks"	1.22	1.28	1.15
Men are the ones who make decisions on important matters of the family	1.36	1.35	1.37
The husband is the economic breadwinner/pillar of the family	1.37	1.39	1.35
The wife is the economic breadwinner/pillar of the family	2.32	2.32	2.33

of education have a better perception on gender equality of men's and women's roles in the family.

Similarly, the data reveals that women and men living in rural areas tend to agree more with these traditional gender role statements compared to those women and men who live in urban areas. Regarding regions, women in the north and central regions tend to agree more with the statement that the husband is the main decision maker in the family, compared to women in the south (proportions of 95.91%, 91.1% and 87.29%, respectively); and the statement that the husband is the main breadwinner in the family (proportions of 97.88%, 96.25% and 93.28%, respectively).

We wanted to see if respondent's thoughts reflect their preservation of traditional gender norms or if

they have more gender equality views. To measure this, respondents were required to choose if men or women were more suitable to do a certain activity.

According to the results of research on traditional gender norms, we propose a frame of traditional gender norms as shown in Table 7.8. Based on this frame, a variable of gender equality (stereotype/no gender stereotype) is created.

Table 7.9 shows that a large majority of respondents (70.05%) favor a more gender equal view of housework, among whom there is a greater proportion of men than women. Over one third of women and one fifth of men still hold traditional views regarding gender norms and division of housework between men and women.

**Table 7.8: Proposed traditional gender norms**

<b>Women are suitable to do following activities</b>	<b>Men are suitable to do following activities</b>
Daily expenses	Buying/selling asset/land
Housework	Work to earn income
Care for children	Communicate with local government
Care for the sick person	Communicate with community
Managing expenses/income in the family	Communicate with kinship
	Ancestor worship

**Table 7.9: Traditional gender norms to housework (%)**

	All	Men	Women
More gender equality view	70.05	77.84	62.46
Hold traditional gender norms	29.95	22.16	37.54

**Table 7.10: Activities in the family by gender (%)**

	ISDS survey 2013 (aged from 18-65)			National Survey 2006 (aged 18-61)		
	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women	Both
Work for income	16.1	1.2	82.7	30.4	5.0	61.7
Housework	0.3	85.0	14.8	0.6	90.1	8.7
Care for children	0.3	62.8	36.9	0.3	85.5	12.9
Care for sick persons	0.8	44.2	55.0	1.9	50.8	46.4
Keep money	5.9	66.7	27.4	6.1	76.2	17.2
Represent family to communicate with local authorities	50.7	5.0	44.3	73.5	3.6	21.3

A high proportion of respondents who have more positive view on gender equality towards division of labor in the family is also reflected when comparing results from this survey with results from the National Survey on Vietnam Families in 2006<sup>10</sup> regarding some of the housework activities. Both surveys conducted by ISDS in 2013 and the National Survey on Vietnam Families provide questions for measuring respondent's perception on which housework is appropriate for men, for women or for both men and women to do.

We chose some of the housework activities listed in both surveys. Results indicate that there is an increase in the proportion of respondents who choose the answer "appropriate for both to do". For instance, Table 7.10 shows that proportion of respondents who chose the answer "appropriate for both" for the activity "work for income" has increased to 82.7% in the 2013 survey compared to 61.7% in the 2006 survey. Also, after a period of time, proportions of respondents who chose the answer category "both men and women" have increased substantially for housework activities (14.8% compared to 8.7%), caring for children (36.9% compared to 12.9%), keeping money (27.4% compared to 17.2%), and working with local authorities (44.3% compared to 21.3%).

Looking at family activities that are often labeled as "women's tasks" such as housework, caring for children, and keeping money or "men's tasks" such as representing the family to communicate with local authorities, a positive change is observed. Proportions of respondents who choose housework, or caring for children, or keeping money in the family are appropriate for women have decreased considerably (85% compared to 90.1%

regarding doing housework; 62.8% compared to 85% regarding caring for children; and 66.7% compared to 76.2% regarding keeping money). In addition, proportion of respondents who think that women are appropriate to represent family when working with local authorities has increased – albeit by a small increment – from 3.6% to 5%. Communication with local authorities was thought as appropriate for men to do by a significant number of respondents but the proportion has decreased (50.7% in 2013 compared to 73.5% in 2006) and the proportion has increased in selecting the answer "appropriate for both" (see Table 7.10).

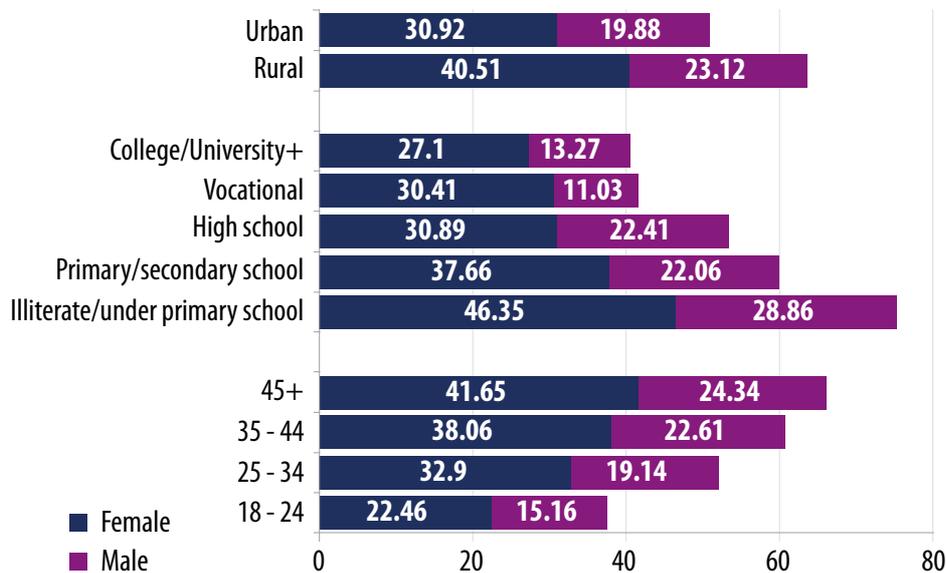
Over time a tendency for changes has been taking place in respondents' perception of the gender division of labor in the family towards a more equal share between genders.

In order to examine the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents who still preserve views on traditional gender norms, perception on gender equality is cross-tabulated with other variables such as age, educational level and area of residence. Results are illustrated in Figure 7.7.

Figure 7.7 indicates that among respondents who agree with traditional gender norms, women make up a higher proportion compared to men in the same group, whether in rural or urban areas, or in the same age group, or at the same level of education. The trend is rather consistent: respondents who are in favor of traditional gender norms are those who live in rural areas rather than in urban areas and have a lower education level, and are in older age groups. This pattern is consistent not only regarding perception of division of labor in the family, but also regarding the perception of capacity/opportunities for employment as presented in the previous chapter.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Report "Results of the National Survey on Vietnam Families year 2006", Hanoi, June, 2008. p.76.

**Figure 7.7: Supporter of traditional gender norms on division of labor in the family by age groups, education level and living in urban-rural area (%)**



**Box 7.5: Gender roles have changed towards a more gender-equal and more rational division of labor and decision making in the family, and women seem to engage more in the decision making processes of the family**

*Before, men took responsibility of key matters in the family, now women can also play a strong role. (Male, 53 years old, Hanoi)*

*Nowadays, women can be the family pillar as well. Because, says about education level, we women also get high education, have wider knowledge, women can earn money, not solely men. Now it is more equal between men and women so anyone can be family pillar. (Female focus group discussion, Long An)*

*If my husband says things that are not right, either I don't follow his lead, or I decide to call my children to ask for their opinions, or I make the decision myself. That's when we need to decide on big things. For small things, I can decide myself, or I let my husband decide himself, otherwise I call my children to come and take part in the decision making. (Female, 59 years old, Hanoi)*

*Before, when it came to big things that were important for the family, it was my husband who made the decisions. Often husbands make the final decision on economic matters or important matters of the family, like building a house. Now women can make decisions, like men. They can make decisions, and of their decisions are more appropriate than men's. For instance, doing family business, not only the owner is doing business but his wife is too, she's even smarter, more skillful, more ready-tongued, and more social than her husband. And nowadays more women take control over the family economy than men do. In general men-women are in a 50:50 status when it comes to decision making. (Male, 58 years old, Hanoi)*

*In the past, men did not wash clothes, now men do. Before, men did not cook, now they do cook and they do housework. [Men and women] help each other to do a lot of things. (Male, 56 years old, Hung Yen)*

In short, in both practice and perception of division of labor, regardless of production activities for income or invisible unpaid housework, there are observed traditional gender stereotypes regarding women's and men's roles: men work in the public sphere, women care for things within the domestic sphere; men do "big things" and women do "small things".

Nowadays, in an electrified and mechanized society supported by technology and labor-saving equipment, women's time and labor spent on domestic jobs has been minimized. However, the actual gender-based division of labor in the family, especially regarding housework tasks, still reflects existing traditional gender norms where men play the role of decision maker and controller of family matters, while women can often only make decisions on daily expenses.

However, a positive change can be seen to be forming over time in people's perception of the gender-based division of labor in the family. In practice, there is an increasing number of people who hold the perception that both genders can do housework in theory and well as in practice. Changes in living and working conditions of families can be among many factors that influence family members of nuclear families to make a more rational division of family activities in order to obtain optimal effectiveness rather than to preserve traditional gender roles. Moreover, women nowadays engage a great deal in income generating activities and they are gradually achieving a stronger voice in discussions and negotiations of family matters. In a family, the power relation between two genders has shifted from the traditional gender norms where men dominate in family decisions

to a more negotiation-like process with more participation by women. Gradually, women's voice in the family is starting to be heard.

Women nowadays are more involved in family decision making. Young couples tend to discuss and implement family decisions more than older age couples. This may be due to young women now working for a better income, they have a higher level of education and their work brings a more stable income than their parents' generation, so gender relations in these families have become more equal.

Despite the change, gender inequality in gender division of labor still persists. In order to change the traditional perceptions of gender-based division of labor and to minimize women's burden of fulfilling double roles, women themselves should take the initiative to change, in addition to influencing men's perceptions for change. Education in the family and improving education for women still play an important role. That is, together with changes in the media and IEC activities aiming to reduce messages that contribute to reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes.



**A positive change**  
can be seen to be forming over  
time in people's perception of the  
gender-based division of labor in  
the family.

A group of women are gathered around a table, looking at documents and talking. The image is overlaid with a purple tint. In the top right corner, there is a purple box containing the text 'CHAPTER 8'.

CHAPTER

# 8

# GENDER INEQUALITY IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

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**This chapter presents the results regarding political and social participation, including: joining the Communist Party, participation in local authorities, socio-political organizations, social organizations and community activities, barriers to participation, and gender-based perceptions and attitudes towards leadership ability and social and political participation.**

The central level of political and administrative structure in Vietnam involves three key agencies: the Communist Party Committee and its Political Bureau, the National Assembly and the Government. At the local level the system includes the communist party committee, the people's council and the people's committee. Among those, overall and ideological leadership belongs to the party committee, planning and decision-making in principle is under the power of the people's council, while the people's committee is an executing agency. In practice, the people's committee is more powerful as it has a budget and other resources. After the party committee is elected, the secretary and other members of the committee are nominated to people's council together with other candidates. Once the people's council is elected, the people's committee is set up among selected members of the people's committee. The chair or vice-chair of the people's council and the people's committee must be the secretary of the party committee. One's failure to be elected into the party committee excludes the opportunity to be elected to the people's council and later to the people's committee. Moreover, being elected to the people's council does not guarantee election to the people's committee.

## COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERSHIP

**There are fewer female members in the Communist Party than male members.**

The national leading role of the Vietnamese Communist party is stipulated in Article 4 of the 2013 Constitution of Vietnam. Hence, holding a Communist party membership asserts an important social status. It also acts as a condition required for leadership positions in government bodies, mass organizations and government-run enterprises. Due to the above, being a member of the Communist party also brings opportunities to participate in making important decisions for the community and the nation as a whole. In Vietnam, the proportion of female members in the Communist party is currently 32%.<sup>11</sup> For years these numbers, as well as the rate of women holding leadership positions in the Communist organizations at all levels, have been low. In the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period of 2011-2020<sup>12</sup> and Decree number 11 of the Political Bureau on women's development, the target of at least 25% of women elected to the Party's committees at all levels has been set in order to lessen the gap between male and female participation in politics. Nevertheless, according to the General Statistic Office of Vietnam, the proportion of women participating in the Communist Party is still low at 32% in 2012<sup>13</sup>, the proportion of women elected to the Party's committees is even lower at about 10% in the 2011-2015 term<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.vn.undp.org/content/dam/Vietnam/docs/Publications/30282\\_Factsheet\\_Women\\_Political\\_Representation\\_in\\_Vietnam\\_VN.pdf](http://www.vn.undp.org/content/dam/Vietnam/docs/Publications/30282_Factsheet_Women_Political_Representation_in_Vietnam_VN.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Target 1, Goal 1, National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020

<sup>13</sup> GSO. 2012. General Statistics on Gender in Việt Nam

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/Home/PrintStory.aspx?distribution=32554&print=true>



## Men have more opportunities to **assume leadership positions** in the party organizations than women.

Among the surveyed populations, 8.34% are currently members of the Vietnam Communist Party, 2.2% reported having been members of the Party, and 89.46% reported that they were never members of the Party. Additionally, the distribution of the involvement of party membership differs by gender ( $p < .001$ ). Men (11.78%) are more likely to report

being current members of the Party than women (4.98%). Men (3.06%) are also more likely than women to report to have been enrolled as members of the Communist Party (1.35%). However, women (93.66%) are more likely than men (85.16%) to report that they have never been a member of the Communist Party. (See Table 8.1 for summary).

**Table 8.1: Membership of the Communist Party**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. Have been a party member	2.2	3.06	1.35
2. Are currently a Party member	8.34	11.78	4.98
3. Have never been a member of the Party	89.46	85.16	93.66

In terms of age, the proportion of male party members increases with age. Starting with 2.46% of the age group 18-24, it increases steadily and reaches 16.64% at the age group of 45 and above. There is no similar pattern observed among women. In the two age groups of 18-24 and 35-44 there is a lower rate of being party members in comparison to women in other age groups.

There are more female Party members in urban areas than in rural areas (7.12% in comparison to 3.74%). This is also true for men (12.42% compared to 10.9%).

Women in the north are more likely to join the party than women in central and south Vietnam (7.95%, 2.47% and 3.64%, respectively). This is also true for men (16.41%, 9.72% and 7.5%, respectively). However, the difference between the proportion of male and female party members in the south is more significant than that in the other two regions (3.04 times in comparison to 2.67

times and 2.06 times).

In terms of education, it is worth noting that, in general, female Party members have a higher educational level than their male counterparts. This leads to an assumption that the requirement for women to join the Party is a higher than that of men. The majority of female Party members have vocational or college educations, university degrees or higher. Among female party members, those with a university degree or higher account for 42.44%, those with vocational or college education takes up 24.14%, and there are very few female party members with high school or lower education (only from 0.11% to 4.93%). Meanwhile, 16.97% of male Party members have only received a high school education and 31.06% have attained vocational or college degrees. The proportion of male party members with university degrees or higher is 1.11 times lower than that of female Party members (38.3% versus 42.44%).

### Box 8.1: Women are regarded as less capable than men

Participants observed that, because of prejudice against women, both men and women do not vote for women:

*In my opinion it's because people still have prejudice towards women. They think that men are more capable than women. During elections, as soon as people see the middle name Thi (a typical middle name for most women) in the candidate's name, they will strike through... I worked as a scrutinizer. I see that they only strike through women's names. (Female, 26 years old, Long An)*

*When I vote for a position I often give preference to men. Even if the male and female candidates are equally capable, I often give preference to men. I even striked through myself when I was the only female candidate among candidates to the commune's party committee. (Female focus group discussion, Hung Yen)*

The reason causing this situation is gender prejudice regarding the capacity and roles of men and women:

*Men are better leaders because they have more capacity, better health and can devote more time for work than women. Women have to devote their time and energy to their family. However, in reality, there are many capable women. (Female, 55 years old, Ho Chi Minh City).*

Findings from qualitative research show that men have more opportunities to assume leadership positions in the party organizations than women.

## PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL AUTHORITY BODIES

### Males are three times more common than women in local authority bodies

Approximately 5% of the surveyed population reported that they had worked for the local authorities at some point (see Table 8.2). Moreover, participation in local leadership differed significantly by gender ( $p < .001$ ). Men (7.62%) reported having ever worked for the local authorities three

times more than women (2.31%).

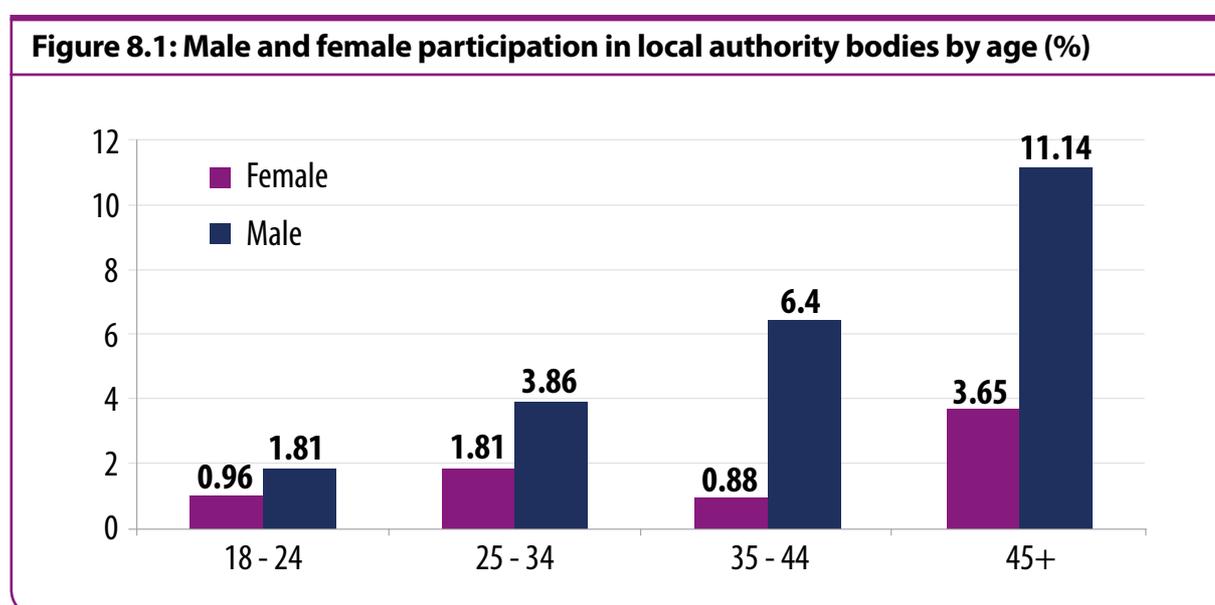
Among participants who reported having worked for the local authorities, 12.93% worked for the Communist Party Committee, 15.49% worked for the People's Committee, 21.53% worked for People's Council, and 59.31% worked for other local authority branches. Women are more likely to have worked in both the Communist Party Office and the People's Council than men (16.32% of women vs. 11.87% of men, 18.42% of women vs. 14.58% of men, respectively). Men (24.42%) were more likely to have worked in the People's Committee than women (12.29%). Although involvement in working for different local authorities differed by gender, the results are not statistically significant. See summaries in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2: Participation in the agencies of local authorities**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Have Ever Worked for the Local Authorities	4.93	7.62	2.31
1. Communist Party Office	12.93	11.87	16.32
2. People's Council	15.49	14.58	18.42
3. People's Committee	21.53	24.42	12.29
4. Other local department	59.31	60.49	55.54

Male participation in local authority bodies increases with age. Starting with 1.81% at the age group 18-24 the rate keeps increasing

steadily and reaches 11.14% at age group 45 and above. The same pattern is not observed in women. See Figure 8.1.



**Opportunity for participation in local authority bodies for men is 10 years ahead of that of women.**

Women mainly participate in local government when they are 45 years old and above (3.65% in comparison to 0.88%, 1.81%, and 0.96%). Meanwhile, men participating in local government are mainly 35-45 years old (6.4%) and 45 years old and above (11.14%). This means men have the opportunity to join the local authority bodies when they are young but women only attain this opportunity when they reach middle age.

This has been explained quite clearly in the qualitative research. The majority of the interviewees stated that women had to play their reproductive role of pregnancy and giving birth, which slows down their career progress in relation to men's. People in communities tend to encourage women to participate in the local government less. It's widely perceived that women's major responsibility is to take care of their family, hence they do not have time to devote to the community's work. This gender prejudice concerning women's role in the family is the main barrier hindering women's participation in local government.

### Box 8.2: Being a young woman is a disadvantage

*Because women have to fulfill their “natural duty”, it takes at least 7 to 10 years for them to get pregnant, give birth and raise small children. So, within that time, women are not usually selected because they are seen as being unable to devote time to their career. That’s a limitation and a disadvantage for women compared to men if they have the same starting point. (Male, 42 years old, Hung Yen).*

*When women are young, they are in the active reproductive age, they get pregnant and give birth to their children ... People say they have no time for their career. People don’t believe that women can cope with both duties. In addition, people don’t trust young women as capable of being leaders. In general people trust women less than men, not only young women. Even if there is a young talented woman, she must jump through hoops for years before being promoted. (Female, 35 years old, Ho Chi Minh City)*

Urban women tend to participate in local authority bodies slightly more than rural women (3.56% versus 1.9%). Hence, the gap in participation in local government between rural men and rural women is larger than that in urban areas (4.18 times compared to 2.12 times).

A similar pattern is observed among men and women in the three regions. The gap between northern men and women is more narrow (2.78 times) compared to those in central (3.1 times) and southern regions (4.49 times).

Moreover, men are more likely to take part in the people’s committee while women mainly join the party committee and the people’s council

( $p < 0.01$ ). This means women may be elected but it is still not easy for them to be selected for the decision-making and executing bodies. (See Table 8.3 for summary).

#### Men hold leadership positions in all local government bodies

Among participants who reported ever having worked in the Communist Party Committee, 37.1% were in a leadership position, 5.02% served in a middle management position, and 57.87% were in a membership position in the party. Among those who reported having ever worked in the People’s

**Table 8.3: Participation in local authority bodies**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Have worked or currently work in at least one local authority body	5.09	7.83	2.41
Urbanicity			
1. Urban		7.56	3.56
2. Rural		7.94	1.9
Region			
3. North		8.06	2.9
4. Central		7.7	2.48
5. South		7.72	1.46
Local authorities			
1. Party Committee	16.02	10.22	17.05
2. People’s Council	13.18	14.68	17.94
3. People Committee	21.45	20.75	13.18
4. Other local departments	58.40	62.47	54.56



Opportunity for participation in local authority bodies for men is **10 years ahead of that** of women.

Committee, 9.95% were in a leadership position, 16.68% served in a middle management position, and 73.37% were in a membership position in the party. Among participants who reported having ever worked in other local authority branches, 21.09% were in a leadership position, 39.18% served in a middle management position, and 39.74% were in a membership position in the party. Among participants who reported having ever worked in the People's Council, 7.93% were in a leadership position, 20.14% served in a position as middle management, and 71.93% were in a membership position in the party. Moreover, the distribution of positions in the People's Council differed by gender ( $p < 0.05$ ). Men were more likely

than women to serve in leadership or middle management positions. See summaries in Table 8.4.

According to participants in the qualitative research, the reason why men are preferred for leadership positions is because of the widespread traditional prejudice against women. People argued that women can be as intelligent as men, some said women can be even more talented, but women are not assertive like men and therefore cannot make good decisions. More importantly, women are burdened with household duties and cannot devote their time and energy to their work. These types of arguments, according to the research participants, have seriously affected the vote for female candidates.

**Table 8.4: Positions in local authorities bodies**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Position in Communist Party Committee			
1. <i>Leader</i>	37.10	43.21	22.87
2. <i>Middle management</i>	5.02	4.28	6.75
3. <i>Staff member</i>	57.87	52.51	13.18
Position in People's Committee Office			
1. <i>Leader</i>	9.95	10.05	9.72
2. <i>Middle management</i>	16.68	15.38	19.95
3. <i>Staff member</i>	73.37	75.47	70.33
Position in People's Council			
1. <i>Leader</i>	7.93	8.99	1.34
2. <i>Middle management</i>	20.14	23.39	0.00
3. <i>Staff member</i>	71.93	67.63	98.66
Position in other local authorities' branch			
1. <i>Leader</i>	21.09	20.59	22.81
2. <i>Middle management</i>	39.18	36.60	48.06
3. <i>Staff member</i>	39.74	42.81	29.14

### **Box 8.3: “Women are not good leaders because they want everything to be perfect”**

*People’s perception from the past until now still favors men and disrespects women. So when a woman is nominated for the People’s Council, people say “She is a woman, she can’t do anything right”, then they will strike through her name” (Male, 55 years old, Long An).*

*In this province there has never been a commune with a female elected as party secretary. Many women are intelligent but when it comes to work they are not decisive enough... I prefer male leaders. They are more dynamic and creative and more efficient. Women are not strong minded. They are not as efficient as men when making good decisions. It’s not about their capacity but about their characteristics. Women are timid and hesitating. They are afraid of this and that. So men have better credibility. (Question: But will there be less corruption if the leaders are women?) Less because women often hesitate to take action. Men do more so they make more mistakes. Women don’t dare to make decisions, so how can they make mistakes? (Male, 73 years old, Hung Yen)*

*For example if a man and a woman have the same capacity, age and educational level but there is only one leadership position, the man will be more likely to get it. Because they say that men can do anything, like networking and socializing, better than women. Women still have to take care of their families. (Female, 42 years old, Long An)*

*Women often want everything to be perfect. They hate to make mistakes. With this character, they could not be good leaders. (Man, 30 years old, Ho Chi Minh City).*

## **PARTICIPATION IN SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Socio-political organizations are legal organizations which have been established by the Communist party for mobilizing the masses to serve its political purposes. In Vietnam, major socio-political organizations include the Youth Union, the Women’s Union, the Farmers’ Association, the Veterans’ Association, the Confederation of Labor and the Fatherland Front.

### **More men in socio-political organizations than women**

Approximately 7% of respondents have participated in a local Youth Union, 27.83% have joined the Women’s Union, 9.81% have been involved in the Veterans’ Association, 23.48% have been engaged in the Farmers’ Union, 4.76% have

participated in the Labor Confederation, 2.47% have been members of the Fatherland Front, and 8% reported that they have been involved in other socio-political organizations.

Furthermore, participation in political organizations differed by gender. Men were more likely to participate in a youth union, veterans’ association, Fatherland Front and other socio-political organizations than women. Compared to the 4.51% of women who participated in a youth union, 9.4% of men were involved in a union ( $p < 0.001$ ). Nearly 19% (18.87%) of men joined a veterans’ association, compared to 1% of women ( $p < 0.001$ ). When comparing involvement with the Fatherland Front according to gender, 3.91% of men were engaged, whereas only 1.06% of women ( $p < 0.001$ ) were involved. See summaries in Table 8.5

**Table 8.5: Participation in socio-political organizations**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. Youth Union	6.92	9.4	4.51
2. Women's Union	27.83	0	54.7
3. Veterans' Association	9.81	18.87	1.00
4. Farmers' Association	23.48	25.75	21.26
5. Labor Confederation	4.76	4.57	4.95
6. Fatherland Front	2.47	3.91	1.06
7. Other socio-political organizations	8.00	9.29	6.76

**Table 8.6: Participation in socio-political organizations by gender and age**

	Men(%)				Women (%)			
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45+	18-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Youth Union	51.4	20.61	2.68	0.73	35.02	7.61	0.57	0.25
Women Union	0	0	0	0	11.93	36.42	58.59	62.96
Veteran Association	0	2.07	5.52	33.94	0	0	0.23	1.86
Farmers Association	1.19	12.86	26.93	30.02	1.96	11.32	18.56	27.55
Labor Confederation	3.72	9.78	4.94	3.27	8.08	10.57	4.67	2.83
Fatherland Front	0.08	0.62	1.05	6.03	0	0.19	0.05	1.69
Others	3.82	5.39	8.61	12.32	0.94	4.12	4.23	9.49

**There is a difference between men and women participating in social-political organizations in different age groups.** The Youth Union consists mainly of people aged 18-24 (35.02% of women and 51.4% of men). Other organizations consist of members mainly aged 45 and above.

### Men lead socio-political organizations

Among participants who reported participating in a local youth union, 11.77% were in a leadership position, 8.07% served in a position of middle management, and 80.16% were in a membership position within the party. Moreover, the distribution of positions in a youth union differed by gender ( $p < 0.05$ ). Women (15.97%) were more likely to serve in the position of leaders

than men (9.71%). Among those who reported participating in the women's union, 1.87% were in a leadership position, 3.49% served in a position of middle management, and 94.64% were in a membership position within the party. Among participants who reported participating in a veterans' association, 4.5% were in a leadership position, 4.26% served in a position of middle management, and 91.24% were in a membership position within the party.

Among participants who reported participating in a farmers' association, 2.65% were in a leadership position, 2.93% served in a position of middle management, and 94.41% were in a membership position within the party. With regards to those who reported participating in labor confederation, 3.84 %

**Table 8.7: Positions in socio-political organizations**

		All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Youth Union	<i>Highest leaders</i>	11.77	9.71	15.97
	<i>Middle management</i>	8.07	8.78	6.62
	<i>Members</i>	80.16	81.51	77.42
Women's Union	<i>Highest leaders</i>	1.87	0	1.87
	<i>Middle management</i>	3.49	0	3.49
	<i>Members</i>	94.64	0	94.64
Veterans Association	<i>Highest leaders</i>	4.5	4.95	2.82
	<i>Middle management</i>	4.26	4.32	3.26
	<i>Members</i>	91.24	91.09	93.93
Farmers Association	<i>Highest leaders</i>	2.65	3.48	1.68
	<i>Middle management</i>	2.93	3.64	2.1
	<i>Members</i>	94.41	92.87	96.23
Labor Confederation	<i>Highest leaders</i>	3.84	3.54	4.11
	<i>Middle management</i>	5.1	3.61	6.44
	<i>Members</i>	91.06	92.85	89.45
Fatherland Front	<i>Highest leaders</i>	12.02	13.08	8.23
	<i>Middle management</i>	8.07	5.43	17.57
	<i>Members</i>	79.91	81.49	74.21
Others	<i>Highest leaders</i>	7.44	11.33	2.23
	<i>Middle management</i>	6.32	4.67	8.53
	<i>Members</i>	86.25	84.01	89.25

were in a leadership position, 5.1% served in a position of middle management, and 91.06% were in a membership position within the party. Within participants who reported participating in the fatherland front, 12.02% were in a leadership position, 8.07% served in a position of middle management, and 79.91% were in a membership position within the party. Lastly, among those who reported participating in other political organizations, 7.44% were in a leadership position, 6.32% served in a position of middle management, and 86.25% were in a membership position in the party. See summaries in Table 8.7.

Except for the Women's Union and Labor Confederation, men hold all the highest and middle management positions in all other socio-political organizations.

### Men participate in socio-political organizations more frequently than women

Over half of the surveyed population reported involvement in political organizations on a regular basis (see Table 8.8). 56% of participants reported participating in a youth union. 56% reported participating in a women's union. Nearly 67% reported frequent involvement with a veterans' association. 61% reported frequent engagement with a farmers' union. Almost three quarters reported regular participation in a labor confederation. 78% frequently participated in a Fatherland front. Finally, 66% reported frequent involvement with other political institutions.

Additionally, the degree of participation in political organizations differed by gender. For instance, men were more likely than women to participate in a farmers' union ( $p < 0.01$ ). Women were more likely than men ( $p < 0.05$ ) to participate in a youth union.

**Table 8.8: Level/Degree of Participation in Political Organizations**

		All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Youth Union	<i>Often</i>	56.39	54.27	60.71
	<i>Sometimes</i>	34.72	36.8	30.48
	<i>Rarely</i>	8.37	8.15	8.81
	<i>Never</i>	0.52	0.78	0
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	3.39 (0.03)	3.45 (0.07)	3.51(0.06)
Women's Union	<i>Often</i>	56.81	0	56.87
	<i>Sometimes</i>	39.15	0	39.07
	<i>Rarely</i>	3.97	0	3.98
	<i>Never</i>	0	0	0
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	3.5 (0.01)	NA	3.53 (0.31)
Veterans' Association	<i>Often</i>	66.81	66.5	72.42
	<i>Sometimes</i>	31.47	31.68	27.58
	<i>Rarely</i>	1.73	1.82	0
	<i>Never</i>	0	0	0
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.7(0.02)	2.65 (0.06)	2.72 (0.12)
Farmers' Union	<i>Often</i>	61.37	65.56	61.37
	<i>Sometimes</i>	35.7	31.44	25.7
	<i>Rarely</i>	2.92	3	2.92
	<i>Never</i>	0	0	0
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	3.58 (0.02)	3.63 (0.04)	3.55 (0.03)
Labor Confederation	<i>Often</i>	74.36	77.36	71.61
	<i>Sometimes</i>	22.66	18.63	26.35
	<i>Rarely</i>	2.98	4.01	2.03
	<i>Never</i>	0	0	0
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.71 (0.03)	2.73 (0.08)	2.7 (0.05)
Fatherland Front	<i>Often</i>	78.27	81.97	64.95
	<i>Sometimes</i>	19.81	15.57	35.02
	<i>Rarely</i>	1.92	2.46	0
	<i>Never</i>	0	0	0
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.76 (0.04)	2.8 (0.05)	2.65 (0.15)
Other Organizations	<i>Often</i>	66.27	66.09	66.51
	<i>Sometimes</i>	29.83	28.4	31.74
	<i>Rarely</i>	3.82	5.51	1.57
	<i>Never</i>	0	0	0.19
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	3.69 (0.02)	3.61(0.09)	3.65 (0.08)

**Table 8.9: Participation in social organizations**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. School union/veteran group	30.95	37.78	24.31
2. Professional society/club	3.42	3.92	2.94
3. Hobby society/club	2.52	3.51	1.57
4. Credit/loan group	8.51	5.64	11.3
5. Other organizations	3.05	2.48	3.61
6. Not a member of any organizations	57.75	52.86	62.51

## PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

### Men tend to participate more in professional and hobby groups, women tend to participate more in credit/loan and religious groups

Social organizations in this particular survey are defined as informally established organizations in which it is not necessary to have legal registration. Examples of such organizations are: a same-school union, a veterans' group, a homeland group, a hobby society/club, a credit/loan group, etc. Approximately 42.25% of the surveyed population reported participation in some type of social organization. Moreover, about 31% of participants reported participation in a same-school union, veterans' group, or a homeland group. 3% reported membership to a professional group. 2.5% reported involvement in a hobby group. 8.5% reported participation in a credit and loan group, and just over 3% reported engagement with other social organizations. Men were more likely than women to participate in same-school unions, veterans' groups, homeland groups, and hobby societies/clubs. Women were more likely to participate in credit/loan groups ( $p < 0.05$ ) and other organizations. Also note that women were more likely to report not being a member of any social organizations. See summaries in Table 8.9.

### Men tend to participate in professional groups and informal associations more often

Over half of the surveyed population reported regular participation in social organizations. 54% reported frequent participation in a school union/veterans' group/birthplace group. 58% reported frequent participation in a professional group. 67% reported frequent involvement in a hobby group. Nearly three quarters reported frequent engagement in a credit/loan group. More than three quarters (77.49%) reported frequent participation in other social organizations.

Additionally, the level of involvement in the various social organizations differed by gender. Men were more likely than women to participate in a school union/veterans' group/birthplace group ( $p < 0.05$ ).

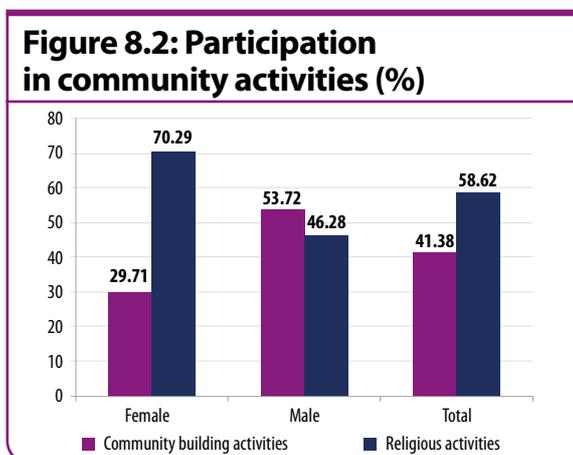
Rural women and men tend to participate in activities of social organizations more often than urban women and men. The proportion of urban woman participating in hometown/school/age/veteran groups is 13.99% higher than that of rural women, for professional groups it is 8.55% higher, for same hobby groups it is 11.15% and for credit/loan groups it is 6.17%. Similarly, the ratio of urban men participating in hometown/school/age/veteran groups is 13.63% higher than that of rural men, for same hobby groups it is 12.12%, for credit/loan groups it is 9.86%.

## PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

### Men tend to participate more in community building activities. Women tend to participate more in religious activities

Upwards of 80% of survey respondents (81.31%) reported participation in some form of community activity. Nearly 42% of the population was involved in community development activities including environmental protection, building a “cultural/model” neighborhood or primary health care prevention. Almost 60% participate in religious activities.

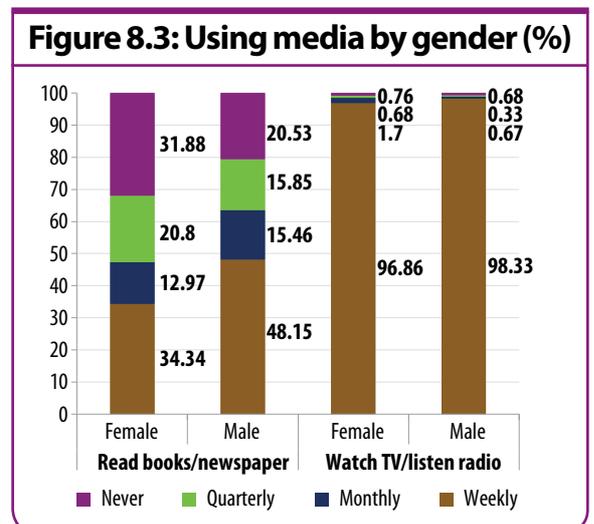
Besides, there is a significant difference between the two genders in participation in community activities. Men participate more in community building and entertainment activities (53.72%) including sports activities held in the neighborhoods, cultural and performance activities, environment protecting activities, communication activities on disease prevention and activities on building neighborhoods and cultural villages. While women are more likely to participate in religious matter rather than community activities (70.29% versus 29.71%). See summaries in Figure 8.2.



## LEISURE ACTIVITIES

### Men and women use mass media intensively

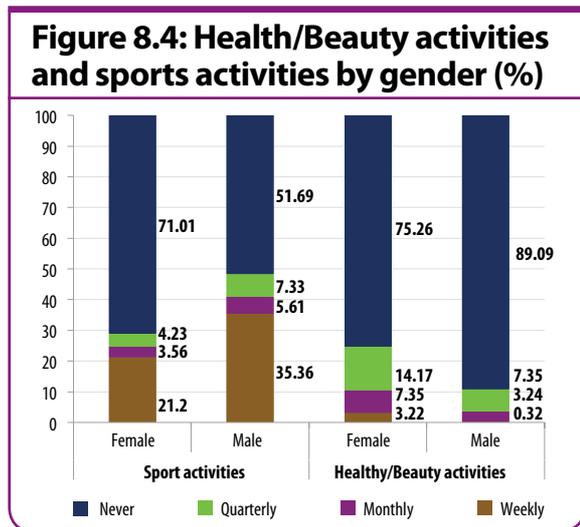
In general, both men and women use mass media intensively, including reading newspapers/books, watching TV and listening to the radio. Nearly 50% male respondents reported that they read newspapers/books regularly/weekly, this rate is 13.81% higher than that of women. Besides, over 97% respondents reported watching TV and listening to the radio weekly. Among them, men watch TV and listen to the radio more than women do (98.33% of men compared to 96.86% of women). See Figure 8.3.



### Men tend to participate more in sports and exercises. Women tend to participate more in health and beauty related activities

In general, the majority of respondents reported that they often play some sort of sport or do exercises. Men tend to spend time on sports and exercise more than women. The rate of men playing sports weekly is 35.36% versus 21.2% of women.

In comparison to sports activities, health and beauty related activities such as visiting beauty salons/having massages/hair wash happen less frequently, only once every quarter. The proportion of women involved in these activities quarterly seems to be higher than that of men (14.17% versus 7.35%). See Figure 8.4.



**Men tend to participate in activities such as visiting/chatting with friends, playing chess, playing cards, drinking alcohol, going to tea/coffee or internet shops more than women do. On the other hand, women tend to go shopping more than men**

Regarding entertainment activities outdoors, those activities that happen weekly are: going out and/or chatting with friends (73.98%), drinking coffee/tea and using the internet (17.79%) and playing chess, cards and games (7.85%). Other activities such as watching movies, going to music concerts, going to entertainment centers, going on trips, traveling, going on holiday, going to club meetings, drinking alcohol, going to karaoke and going shopping often take place once every quarter of a year.

Besides, there is a difference between women and men in participating in entertainment activities outdoor. Men tend to participate more than women in activities like going out/chatting with friends (77.55% and 70.5%), playing chess/cards/games (13.7% and 2.15%), drinking alcohol (20.08% versus 0.84%) and going to tea/coffee Internet shops (28,93% and 6,93%).

## BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

**The main barrier to participating in socio-political organizations for men is lack of time, and for women it is health and family issues**

There were various barriers preventing participants from being involved in socio-political organizations. According to Table 8.10, the top five barriers included: having no time, not being invited, finding it unnecessary, family issues, and not being eligible to participate in the socio-political organizations. Over half of the survey population (53.62%) reported having no time as the barrier preventing them from participating in socio-political organizations. Over one fifth (21.66%) reported that not being invited into the socio-political organization was the primary barrier to engagement. Additionally, the barriers preventing participation in socio-political organizations differed significantly by gender. Men (10.64%) were more likely than women (5.21%) to report that not being eligible is a barrier to participation in socio-political organizations ( $p < 0.01$ ). Men (1.29%) were also more likely than women (0.27%) to report that disability issues presented a barrier to joining socio-political organizations ( $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, women (15.61%) were more likely than men (11.11%) to report that family issues were a barrier to being involved in socio-political organizations ( $p < 0.01$ ). See summaries in Table 8.10.

**Table 8.10: Barriers to participating in social–political organizations**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. I find it unnecessary	18	18.37	17.49
2. I wasn't invited to participate	21.66	20.29	23.52
3. I am not eligible	8.34	10.64	5.21
4. Having no those associations at local	1.36	1.58	1.07
5. Not aware of these organizations	5.18	4.78	5.72
6. Don't have time	53.62	55.46	51.12
7. Having health issues	8.19	6.8	10.53
8. Disability issues	0.86	1.29	0.27
9. Family issues	13.02	11.11	15.61
10. Not being encouraged by family	0.37	0.21	0.59
11. Other reasons	4.1	3.79	4.53

**Men tend not to participate in social organizations because they find them more unnecessary than women do. Meanwhile, more women do not participate in these activities because of family issues than men**

As presented in Table 8.11, the top five barriers that impacted participants' involvement in social organizations include: having no time, finding it unnecessary, family issues, not being invited, and not being aware of these social organizations. Nearly half of the surveyed population (48.66%) reported having no time as the barrier preventing participation in social organizations. One fourth (25.81%) reported participation in social organizations as unnecessary, and 12.63% reported that family issues presented a barrier to involvement in

social organizations. 11% reported not being invited to join social organizations as the main reason for lack of participation. Almost 10% reported not being aware of social organizations at a local level.

Additionally, barriers to participation in social organizations differed significantly by gender. Men (8.31%) were more likely than women (5.57%) to report that not being eligible was a barrier preventing their participation in social organizations ( $p < 0.001$ ). Men (1.2%) were also more likely than women (0.29%) to report disability issues as a barrier ( $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, women (16.25%) were more likely than men (8.23%) to report that family issues presented barriers to being involved in social organizations ( $p < 0.01$ ). See summaries in Table 8.11.

**Table 8.11: Barriers to participating in social organizations**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
I find it unnecessary	25.81	27.7	24.27
I wasn't invited to participate	11.34	11.04	11.58
I am not eligible	6.81	8.31	5.57
Having no those associations at local	7.75	8.45	6.82
Not aware of these organizations	9.46	8.4	10.33
Don't have time	48.66	47.4	49.69
Having health issues	7.9	8.6	7.33
Disability issues	0.7	1.2	0.29
Family issues	12.63	8.23	16.25
Not being encouraged by family	0.57	0.46	0.66
Other reasons	3.72	2.89	4.41

**Table 8.12: Barriers to participate in community activities**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
I find it unnecessary	19.92	22.96	16.42
I wasn't invited to participate	11.14	10.53	11.85
I am not eligible	1.71	1.65	1.77
Having no those associations at local	4.32	3.84	4.88
Not aware of these organizations	8.09	8.33	7.81
Don't have time	60	59.35	60.75
Having health issues	13.37	15.9	10.47
Disability issues	1.31	1.9	0.62
Family issues	11.84	7.71	16.58
Not being encouraged by family	0.62	0.12	1.21
Other reasons	4.41	2.66	6.42

**Men tend not to participate in community activities because they either find them unnecessary or due to health issues. On the other hand, women tend not to participate due to family issues**

Table 8.12 describes the barriers that impacted survey participants' engagement in community activities. The top barriers include: having no time, finding it unnecessary, health issues, family issues, and not being invited to participate in those community activities. 60% reported having no time as the main barrier to participation in community activities. Nearly one fifth (19.92%) reported that they did not participate in community activities because they found it unnecessary. 13% reported that health issues presented a barrier to community activity involvement. Almost 12% reported that having family issues was a barrier, and 11% reported that not being invited to join community activities was the primary factor impacting their participation.

Additionally, the barriers that impact participants' engagement in community activities differed significantly by gender. Women (16.58%) were more likely than men (7.71%) to report that family issues present a barrier to involvement in social organizations ( $p < 0.05$ ). Women (1.21%) were also more likely than men (0.12%) to report

not being encouraged by family ( $p < 0.01$ ). See summaries in Table 8.12.

In conclusion, there are two main barriers to the social and political participation of men and women. The first one is due to objective reasons such as family issues or lack of an invitation. The second type is related to the subjective mentality of the person, this includes finding these activities unnecessary, not knowing about these organizations, not being able to arrange time to participate, as well as for personal health issues. Among those, men tend to face barriers related to time, health and due to finding these activities unnecessary more than women. On the other hand, women often face barriers from their family to participate in social and political activities more than men do.

### **GENDER-BASED PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP ABILITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF MEN AND WOMEN**

This research has measured gender-based perceptions and attitudes towards the leadership ability

**Table 8.13: Perception on the leadership ability of women and men**

Statement		All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Men have better leadership ability than women	<i>Disagree</i>	15.96	18.09	13.89
	<i>Partial Agree</i>	23.09	24.2	22.00
	<i>Agree</i>	60.95	57.71	64.11
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.41	2.40	2.50
Organizations will work more effectively with male leaders	<i>Disagree</i>	15.68	16.98	14.41
	<i>Partial agree</i>	24.85	25.49	24.23
	<i>Agree</i>	59.47	57.53	61.36
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.38	2.41	2.47
Highest positions in a nation should be reserved for men	<i>Disagree</i>	19.89	20.75	19.05
	<i>Partial agree</i>	23.25	24.61	23.25
	<i>Agree</i>	56.87	54.64	56.87
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.34	2.34	2.40

and political participation of men and women. The participants were requested to choose one option, agree or disagree, to ten statements. The findings show men and women had significantly different perceptions and attitudes regarding men's and women's leadership ability and political participation.

### Men are perceived as better leaders

Table 8.13 indicates that the majority agree with all three statements which confirm that men have more leadership ability in socio-political organizations than women. It's worth noting that women tend to agree with those perceptions more than men. For example, women are more likely than men to agree that men have more leadership capacity than women ( $p < 0.05$ ). Women (56.87%) are more likely to agree that the highest position in the nation should be reserved for men as compared to men (54.64%). Women (61.36%) are also more likely than men (57.53%) to agree that organizations will work more effectively with male leaders. See summaries in Table 8.13.

### Strong prejudice on women's leadership capacity persists

Table 8.14 reflects a strong prejudice about

women's leadership capacity. Almost 63% of respondents agree with the statement that it is easier to compromise with women at work. The majority of people think that women also have leadership ability but that they are easily distracted by family issues (80.21%). Almost half of respondents agreed that women often make decisions based on their feelings (48.4%). About two thirds believe that they are incapable of working under pressure (64.49%). More than half think that women are not as respected as men (52.01%) and are therefore not suitable as leaders in political organizations but rather more suited for welfare and union activities (78.23%). See Table 8.14 on next page.

Additionally, men (51.12%) are more likely than women (49.72%) to agree that women are not consistent in making work decisions. Finally, men (65.59%) are also more likely than women (64.30%) to agree that women are unable to work under pressure.

Women again are more skeptical about women's leadership capacity than men. For example women tend to agree that it is easier to compromise with women at work. Women are more likely to believe that women are not as respected as men ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 8.14: Perception on the capacity in political participation of women (%)**

Statement		All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
It is easier to compromise with women at work	<i>Disagree</i>	9.89	11.14	8.67
	<i>Partial agree</i>	27.1	27.47	26.74
	<i>Agree</i>	63.01	61.38	64.59
	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.51	2.50	2.55
Women are not consistent in making work decisions	<i>Disagree</i>	18.79	18.42	19.15
	<i>Partial agree</i>	30.80	30.47	31.13
	<i>Agree</i>	50.41	51.12	49.72
	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.73	2.33	2.31
Women are unable to work under high pressure	<i>Disagree</i>	14.09	14.06	14.13
	<i>Partial agree</i>	20.97	20.35	21.57
	<i>Agree</i>	64.49	65.59	64.30
	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.48	2.52	2.50
Women have leadership ability but they are easily distracted by family issues	<i>Disagree</i>	3.41	3.99	2.85
	<i>Partial agree</i>	16.38	16.28	16.48
	<i>Agree</i>	80.21	79.73	80.67
	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.73	2.76	2.78
Women often make decisions based on feelings	<i>Disagree</i>	21.19	21.16	21.22
	<i>Partial agree</i>	30.41	31.49	30.41
	<i>Agree</i>	48.40	47.34	48.40
	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.26	2.26	2.28
Women are not as respected as men	<i>Disagree</i>	22.59	21.66	23.50
	<i>Partial agree</i>	25.40	27.84	23.03
	<i>Agree</i>	52.01	50.51	53.47
	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.41	2.29	2.30
Women are more suited for welfare and union activities than men	<i>Disagree</i>	5.5	5.62	5.38
	<i>Partial agree</i>	16.27	16.08	16.44
	<i>Agree</i>	78.23	78.29	78.23
	Mean (SD)		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	<i>Average Score</i>	2.69	2.73	2.73

Most people who participated in the qualitative research also hold the perception that men have better leadership abilities than women.

To identify factors influencing the gender-based perceptions and attitudes towards the leadership

capacity of men and women we assigned values of 0, 1 and 2 to each answer option (Disagree, Partial Agree, and Agree). Then we calculated the values of each statement and the median. Those with a total score within the range from 0 to the median belong

### Box 8.4: Women are softer and weaker

*Men are always more clear-minded than women... Men have greater vision than women. Women can be leaders, there are women who are much more intelligent than men are, but in terms of assertion, men are much more assertive than women. (Female, 55 years old, Hung Yen)*

*I prefer male leaders... Men are more assertive and creative. They solve things faster in a more skillful and flexible manner. They dare to think and take action. Women can't decide much. Women are softer and weaker. (Male, 73 years old, Hung Yen)*

*Who should be Prime Minister or President of the country? I think they should be male. In Europe the President of Germany is a woman, but we are different. In Vietnam we should let men do it, that's better. In Thailand there is a female Prime Minister, she is weak, men are stronger. I think it's better for men to do it. Anyway they are more intelligent than women. Women are also too busy with their families. (Female, 45 years old, Long An)*

to the Less Prejudiced group and those with total scores within the range from the median upwards are in the Prejudiced group.

As a result, women have more prejudices than men do (53.56% compared to 50.32%). However, there are differences between men and women across variables, including education, age, marital status, rural/urban, income and occupation/job.

#### **The lower the level of education a person has the more gender prejudice he/she holds**

Research results show that in both men and women groups, people with a lower educational level have stronger gender prejudices. In contrast, the higher the educational level a person has attained the less gender prejudice he/she has. Specifically, 61.56% of men and 69% of women in the Prejudiced group have an educational level of primary school or lower. On the other hand, 54.92% to 75.72% of men and 64.82% to 86.41% of women who have a college or university or higher education level are in the Less Prejudiced group.

#### **The older people are the more gender prejudice they have**

Besides educational level, age is also a factor influencing attitudes towards leadership ability

and the political participation of men and women. Research findings show that the older the people are the more prejudiced they are; the younger they are the less prejudiced they are ( $P < 0.00$ ). For instance, for both men and women's groups, the proportion of people with more gender prejudice belongs to those aged 45 and above (58.69% of women and 56.3% of men). The younger group aged 18-24 has the least gender prejudice (29.26% of men and 39.35% of women).

In contrast, among the Less Prejudiced group, people aged 18-24 make up the biggest proportion (70.74% of women and 60.75% of men). The group aged 45 and above accounts for the smallest proportion in the Less Prejudiced group (41.31% of women and 43.7% of men).

There is a difference in attitudes of men and women between different age groups. In the Less Prejudiced group, the younger women are the less prejudiced in comparison to their male counterparts. For example, in the age group 18-24, the rate of women with a Less Prejudiced perception is 10% higher than that of men. Conversely, in the older age groups, from 25-34, 35-44, and 45 years old and higher, there are more men with less prejudice than women (3.82%, 9.53% and 2.39%, respectively).



**Women in the south have stronger prejudices than women in the other regions. The same goes for men**

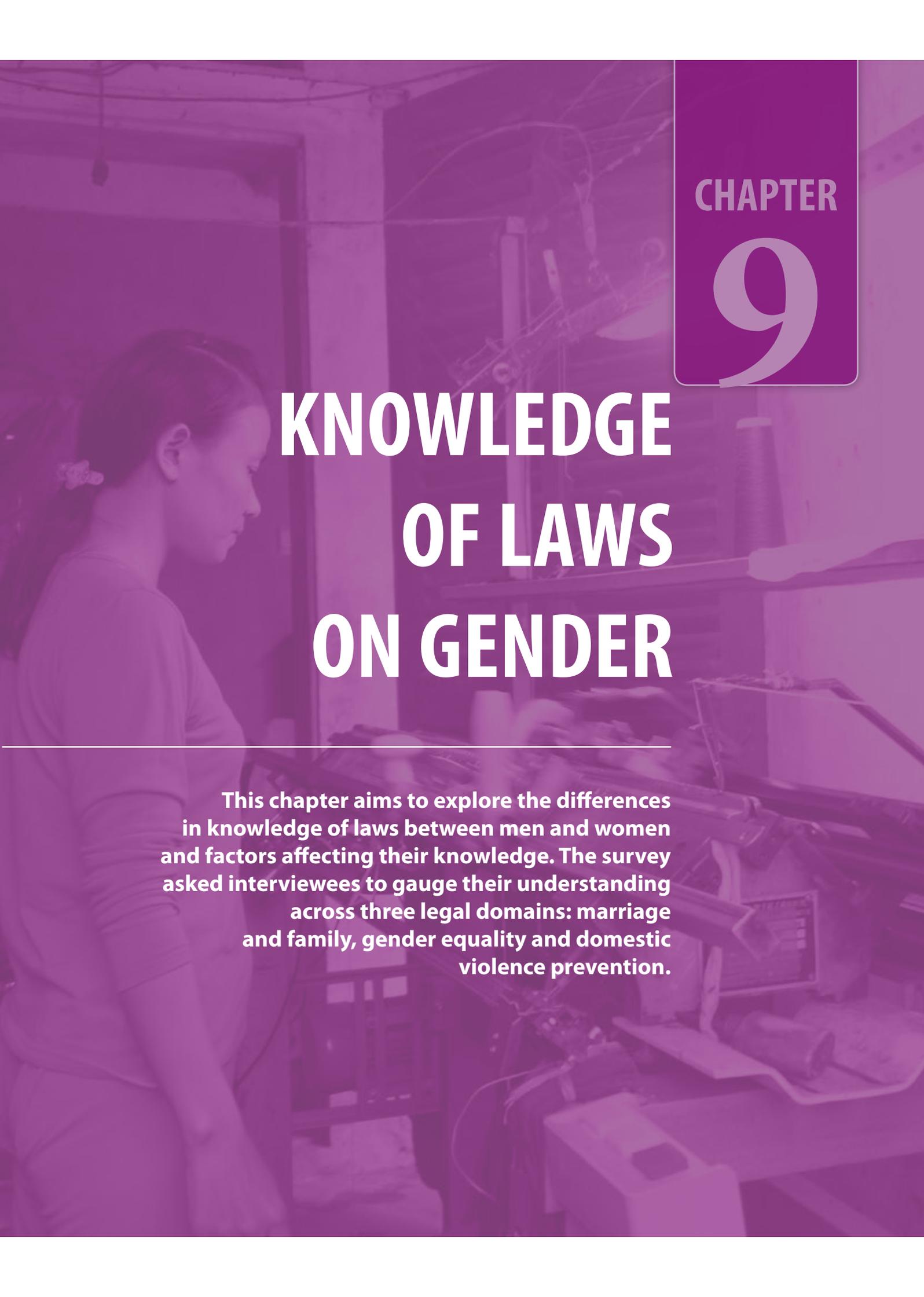
Another finding from this research is that there is a difference in the attitudes towards the social and political participation ability of women and men between different regions ( $p < 0.01$ ). In detail, among women, those with the most gender prejudice are those living in the south (56.99%), followed by those in the centre (54.13%) and the least are those in the north (50.39%). This is also true for men. The difference between women and men with gender prejudice in regards to leadership ability and political participation is most significant in the north, followed by the central and southern regions.

**Farmers and manual laborers have stronger prejudices than other occupational groups**

People with different occupations have different perspectives on the leadership ability and political participation of men and women ( $p < 0.001$ ). Farmers and manual labor groups have more gender prejudice than other occupational groups. In contrast, the management and administrative group has less gender prejudice than other groups. This is true for both men and women.

Besides, in the manual labor and farmer groups, more men than women are gender prejudiced. Though in the group of trained workers and management/administrative groups, more men than women are less gender prejudiced.

To conclude, in practice, there is still gender inequality in social and political participation. Factors such as education, age, region, living conditions, and career all have an influence on the perspective on leadership ability of men and women. Hence, intervention programs on gender equality need to pay attention to these factors when designing programs on changing the perception and behavior of the community.



CHAPTER

# 9

# KNOWLEDGE OF LAWS ON GENDER

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**This chapter aims to explore the differences in knowledge of laws between men and women and factors affecting their knowledge. The survey asked interviewees to gauge their understanding across three legal domains: marriage and family, gender equality and domestic violence prevention.**

The survey asked interviewees to answer questions about their understanding of three areas of law: marriage and family, gender equality, and domestic violence prevention. The scoring of these areas ranged from 1 to 4 representing interviewees' levels of familiarity with the law —i.e., if they had never heard of these three laws (1), had heard the name of the law but did not know the contents (2), had a general understanding of the contents (3), or had a clear understanding of the contents (4). A lower score indicates a lower level of understanding; on the contrary, a higher score indicates a higher level of understanding. On average, a score between 2 and 3 can be interpreted as familiarity with the name of a law with little understanding of the contents.

Overall, the general population shows little concern when it comes to regulations involving gender. However, there are different levels of concern for those laws across different social groups.

## MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LAW

In general, people show very minimal understanding of the Marriage and Family Law. Over 18% of the population informed that they had never heard about this law, a third (34.4%) reported having heard of the law but did not know its content. About 43% said that they had a very basic understanding, and only 4.05% reported having a clear understanding of the contents. The average score of the population was 2.38, suggesting little understanding of the law on marriage and family.

There was a gender difference in understanding of the marriage and family law. Among the male population, over 14% said they had never heard about this law, a third (34.4%) reported having heard the name but not knowing the contents, and only 5.58% reported having a clear understanding of the contents. Among the female population, the respective percentages were 21.28%, 33.85% and 4.02%. Comparing the men's average score to the women's, the men's score (2.45) was significantly higher than the women's score (2.31). Thus, it was evident that men had a higher level of understanding of the law on marriage and family than women ( $p < 0.05$ ). (See Table 9.1 for summaries).

**Table 9.1: Understanding of the Law on Marriage and Family**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. Never heard of the law	18.13	14.9	21.28
2. Heard the name but don't know the content	34.12	34.4	33.85
3. Have general understanding about the content	42.82	45.12	40.82
4. Have a clear understanding of the contents	4.05	5.58	4.02
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	2.38 (0.11)	2.45 (0.11)	2.31 (0.11)



Both men and women still **show little concern** about gender-related laws.

The urban population has a slightly higher percentage of understanding of the Marriage and Family Law than those in a rural area.

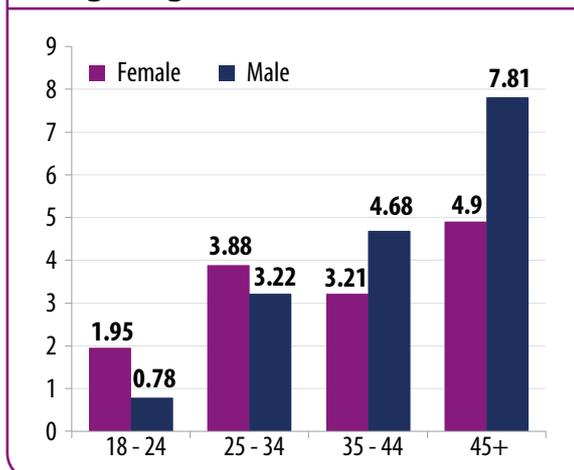
In comparison across the three regions, women in the north reported the highest level of understanding of the Marriage and Family Law (4.92%), followed by those in the central region (4.36%) and the lowest level of understanding is among those in the south (2.64%).

Young people show less concern towards the Marriage and Family Law than those of older age. This tendency is consistent between men and women (See Figure 9.1)

understanding with 29.66%, 1,39 times higher than those with only a vocational or college degree, 6.04 times higher than those with a high school degree, 13.73 times higher than those who only attended secondary school, and 29.6 times higher than those with a primary education level or lower.

When comparing the understanding of men and women on the Marriage and Family Law, the gap is made smaller as women possess higher education levels. For example, among those with a vocational or college degree, the percentage of men with a clear understanding of the law is 1.78% higher than that of women. The difference between those with a secondary school education is 1.25%, and among those with a primary school education or lower is 0.26%. However, the percentage of women with a bachelor's degree or higher with a clear understanding of the law is higher than that of men of the same education level (29.66% and 23.21%, respectively).

**Figure 9.1: Men and women who have clear understanding of the Law on Marriage and Family according to age (%)**



Findings from the research showed that highly educated women have a better understanding of the law than other groups. Women with university degrees or higher have the highest percentage of

## LAW ON GENDER EQUALITY

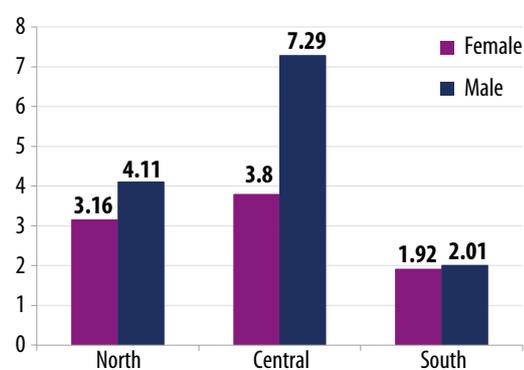
Among the surveyed population, 25.62% reported that they had never heard of the law, just over a third (35.83%) reported that they had heard of the law without knowing its content, another third (34.7%) reported a general understanding of the content and only 3.85% reported having a clear understanding of the contents. The average score of the population was 2.21. Note that the percentage of “never heard of the law” on gender equality was the highest in three areas (Marriage and Family: 18.13%; Domestic Violence Prevention: 17.86%), suggesting very little understanding of the law on gender equality among the Vietnamese population.

**Table 9.2: Understanding of the Law on Gender Equality**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. Never heard of the law	25.62	21.82	29.33
2. Heard of the name but don't know the content	35.83	37.01	34.68
3. Have general understanding about the content	34.7	36.48	32.95
4. Have clear understanding of the contents	3.85	4.68	3.04
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	2.21 (0.12)	2.29 (0.14)	2.14 (0.11)

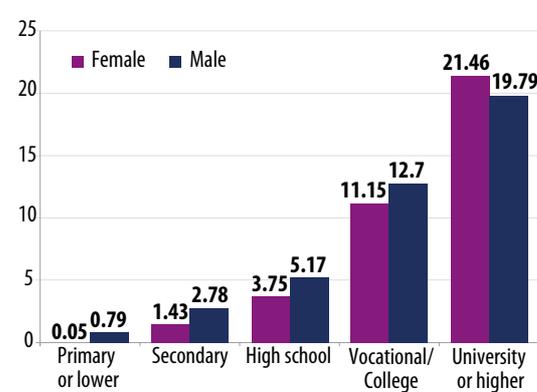
There was a difference in the understanding of the Law on Gender Equality between men and women. Among the men surveyed, over 20% informed that they had never heard of the law, 37.01% had heard of the law without knowing its content, 36.48% had a general understanding of the content and only 4.68% had a clear understanding of the content. Meanwhile, among the women surveyed, the respective percentages were 29.33%, 34.68%, 32.95% and 1.92%. This was the evidence to back up our conclusion that men know more about the Law on Gender Equality than women ( $p < 0.05$ ). See Table 9.2.

Women from northern Vietnam and men from central Vietnam have a better understanding of the Law on Gender Equality than people surveyed in other areas. (See Figure 9.2).

**Figure 9.2: Women and men who have clear understanding of the Law on Gender Equality across regions (%)**

Women of Kinh ethnicity with an understanding of the Law on Gender Equality have a higher percentage than those of ethnic minorities. The same applies for men.

Women with a higher level of education tend to have a better understanding of the Law on Gender Equality. For example, women with a university degree or higher have a better understanding of the law, accounting for 21.46%, followed by those who have a vocational/college education (11.15%), women with a high school education (3.75%), women with a secondary school education (1.43%). Women with a primary school education or below have the lowest percentage (0.05%).

**Figure 9.3: Men and women who have clear understanding of the Law on Gender Equality across levels of educations (%)**

## LAW ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Similar to the above laws, findings from research showed that the general population's understanding of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention is rather limited. Over 17% of the surveyed sample reported that they had never heard of the law; 38.1% had heard of the law without knowing its content, while 38.78% had a general understanding and only 5.26% had a clear understanding of the content. The average score of the population was 2.38. This also suggested little understanding of the law on domestic violence prevention.

The gender difference in the understanding

of the law on Domestic Violence Prevention was also demonstrated. Over 14% of men in the survey reported that they had never heard of the law; 39.25% had heard of the law without knowing its content, 39.95% had a basic understanding of it and only 6.33% reported having a clear understanding of the contents. Meanwhile, the respective percentage among women were 21.16%, 36.98%, 37.64% and 4.22%. Once again, the result showed that men had a higher level of understanding of the law on domestic violence prevention than women ( $p < 0.05$ ). See Table 9.3 for summaries.

**Table 9.3: Understanding of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention**

	All (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1. Never heard of the law	17.86	14.47	21.16
2. Heard the name but don't know the content	38.1	39.25	36.98
3. Have general understanding of the content	38.78	39.95	37.64
4. Have clear understanding of the contents	5.26	6.33	4.22
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
	2.38 (0.10)	2.42 (0.11)	2.28 (0.10)

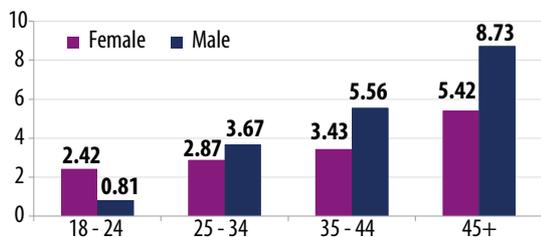
People in urban areas have a slightly better understanding of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention than those in rural areas. Women in urban areas know more about the law than those in rural areas (6.87% versus 3.03%). Men in urban areas also have a better understanding of the law than those in rural areas (8.1% versus 5.59%).

Women in the north and men in central Vietnam know more about the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention than those in other regions. Women in the north are those with the best understanding of the law, followed by those in

central Vietnam and lastly those from the south (5.49% versus 4.62% and 2.22%). Meanwhile, men in central Vietnam have a better understanding of the law than those in the north and the south (9.81% versus 5.86% and 2.44%).

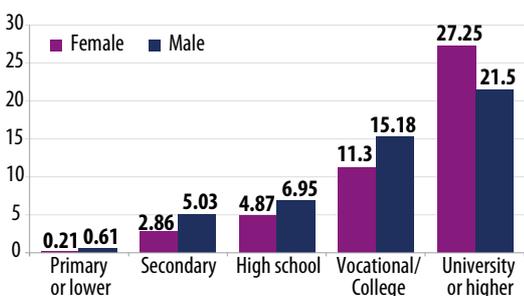
Women of ethnic minorities have less understanding of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention than those of Kinh ethnicity. The same applies for men. More young women seem to show less concern about the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention. (See Figure 9.4)

**Figure 9.4: Men and women who have clear understanding of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention according to age (%)**



Research findings pointed out that level of education affected the awareness, capability and understanding of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention among men and women. Women with a higher level of education tend to report a better understanding of the law. (See Figure 9.5)

**Figure 9.5: Men and women who have clear understanding of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention according to level of education (%)**



However, among those with a higher level of education, the gender difference in the understanding of the law further narrowed. If the difference in percentage among men and women with vocational/college education is still 3.88%, among those with university degrees or higher, the percentage of women having a clear understanding of the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention already is higher than those of men (27.25% compared to 21.50%). See Figure 9.5.

Thus, we can see that the general population tends to show very little concern when it comes to laws and regulations on gender. Men tend to have a better understanding of the laws than women, regardless of ethnicity, age, levels of education, areas of residency and regions. Which might be explained by men's more frequent activities involving information gathering like reading newspapers, watching TV or listening to the radio more than women. However, the factors regarding age, education, place of residence and region do have effects on the awareness of laws among men and women. Among those of a younger age, with a higher level of education and residing in urban areas, the gender difference in the understanding and knowledge of the laws further narrowed. In addition, those of Kinh ethnicity and residing in the north and central Vietnam show a larger gender difference in knowledge and understanding of the laws than those of ethnic minorities and in other regions.



CHAPTER

# 10

# CONCLUSIONS

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**This study is one of a few large-scale studies examining gender inequality in contemporary Vietnam. The dataset provides rich information to understand differences between Vietnamese men and women regarding access to opportunities, number and nature of opportunities available, as well as expectations imposed on the two genders in different social environments.**

Traditional rigid gender perceptions towards men's and women's values and roles are found as underlying causes of gender inequality in Vietnam. While other aspects of this longstanding perception have weakened over time, the value of the role of family caregiver assigned to women is still firmly sustained in the minds and behaviors of Vietnamese men and women across all social strata. Women, in particular, deeply internalize this value and, in many cases, are willing to compromise their individual well-being and advancement.

The research however also found that this perception of women as primary family caregivers does not necessarily have the same influence across the country. The factors of regional social and cultural context can color the influence in different shades. This perception can also be altered with the improvement of education and exposure to more positive role models.

### **Women as Caregivers in the Domestic Sphere**

Madame Ton Nu Thi Ninh, in her foreword for Sheryn Sanberg's book "Lean In," wrote: "In Vietnam, constant upholding of the so-called 'traditional virtues and roles tend to result in women often becoming hostage to their own gilded castles.' This is truly fit to the key findings of this survey. Throughout the analyses in the previous chapters, a picture of Vietnamese women began to emerge in the frame of the rigid traditional gender attitudes which determine and assign the roles of family caregivers to women. Deeply internalizing this role, Vietnamese women not only take care of domestic work in their families of origin before marriage, but they also take care of both their own nuclear family

and their husbands' families after marriage. This gendered and institutionalized family caregiver role is also reinforced by other key social systems to ensure that Vietnamese women will likely continue to fulfill their normative roles as family caregivers.

### **Education**

In Vietnam, women have significantly lower levels of education compared to men. Women are more likely to experience interruptions in their education because of financial difficulties, obligations in house chores, pregnancy, and childcare duties. These barriers for education were closely tied to their caregiver role in the family. Because women are still regarded as family caregivers who do not need a lot of formal education, they are more likely to give up their formal education to perform these family caregiver roles. This includes assisting family members, particularly men, as they navigate difficult situations. Vietnamese women also internalized the attitudes that women should limit their educational attainment and that women should have a lower educational attainment than their husbands in order to maintain familial harmony.

### **Property ownership**

Ownership or co-ownership of the most valuable property of the family plays an important role in balancing the power relations and bargaining power between the two genders in the family. However, almost half of women do not own residential land and only one fifth of women own land or houses, while more than half of men are sole owners of land or houses. Men also own the most valuable property more often, including production facilities and vehicles.



## Traditional rigid gender perceptions towards men's and women's values and roles are found as underlying causes of gender inequality in Vietnam.

### Employment and work

Women's family caregiver roles also interfered with women's workforce participation. Although women were just as likely as men to participate in the workforce, more than a fifth of women who were not working during the survey period reported that their household chore obligations were the top reason for not working, as opposed to only 2% of the men who reported the same reason. Moreover, when participating in the workforce, women were more likely to work on the farm or in a small businesses owned and run by their families or the informal sector as well. As a consequence of this, women were more likely to pay their social and health insurance out of their own pockets. This resulted in a very low percentage of women working in these sectors having social and health insurance, implying their lack of rights and benefits in terms of social welfare and security. In workplaces, women tend to take on more work tasks, reflecting their family caregiver roles. These tasks require women to take care of properties as if they were doing housekeeping. For example, women managed finances, cared for animals (preparing food and feeding), and cleaned facilities. Women were less likely to get promoted or attend training or conferences, partly due to their caregiver roles in the family.

### Marriage and family

Under the patriarchal and patrilocal institution of gender that continues to influence cultural behaviors in contemporary Vietnam, women, who take the role of family caregivers, can be transferred from one family to another through marriage. Women married at younger ages than men and were more likely to have their decisions made by their

parents. After marriage, women were more likely to live with their spouses' families. Indeed, more than 60% of married women lived with their husbands' families after marriage. Again, due to the patrilocal cultural structure, Vietnamese women tended to live with their husbands' family, particularly with the husband's parents. Both physically and ideologically, they became a part of their husbands' family. Consequentially, women provided more caregiving assistance to their parents-in-law than to their own parents. At the same time, because men provided more assistance to their own parents, wives' parents received significantly lower levels of support than husbands' parents. This was reflected in the fact that women were less likely than men to be considered part of their own biological families. This was evident in family trees, which listed female biological children less often than male biological children. Women also internalized this residential arrangement and believed that their husbands' family home should be their primary residential place. Women further preferred to live with their sons over their daughters once their children became married.

### Intimate life

The care and support that women are expected to provide as family caregivers is also manifested in their intimate life. Under traditional cultural norms, which again, continue to persist today, Vietnamese women are trained to respond, sexually, to their husbands. In other words, women are taught that caregiving requires them to privilege the sexual needs of their husbands over their own sexual gratification. This was reflected in the survey sections, which found that married Vietnamese

women were far less likely to initiate sexual activities and that they were less satisfied with their sexual activities than men. At the same time, however, women were in charge of the use of contraception, although the majority of respondents reported that the decision to use family planning methods was jointly made by couples. Finally, women also internalized the high moral standards set up for women regarding their sexuality.

### **Domestic violence**

Given that women were considered family caregivers, rather than household heads that provide leadership to the family, and given the reality that women are seen as “temporary” members of their own family and then “newcomers” to their husband’s family (or can be transferred between families), it was not surprising to find that women were sometimes treated with less respect than men. Among the surveyed population, close to 7% of married Vietnamese women reported that they experienced some sort of physical domestic violence within the last 12 months. More than a quarter of married Vietnamese women reported they experienced verbal abuse from their spouses. In general, women reported significantly greater levels of both physical and verbal abuse than men did. Note that 13% of married Vietnamese women experienced unwanted sex within the marriage during the 12 months prior the survey, and about 10% of divorced women reported that domestic violence was the major reason they had filed for a divorce.

### **Division of domestic work and decision making in the family**

Home is the primary place where Vietnamese

women work and experience their defined roles as caregivers, and this was reflected in the survey results. The major tasks of family caregivers were to take care of the needs of family members and support their husbands, while the work and decision-making regarding family lineage and public relationships were deferred to the household heads, usually the husbands of the family caregivers. Among the surveyed population, women shared the majority of domestic tasks, including managing family finances, cooking, grocery shopping, cleaning, and parenting, among others. This is similar to previous study findings on domestic tasks in Vietnam (Knodel, Loi, Jayakody, & Huy, 2005; Teerawichitchainan, Knodel, Loi, & Huy, 2010). In contrast, women have a limited role in those activities that involved family lineage or matters external to the family, such as interacting with local government agencies.

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes are still widely prevalent and strongly supported by people across all social strata. More women than men believe that the husband is the pillar of the family and the one who makes decisions on important matters of the family. More women than men believe that women’s heavenly granted tasks are taking care of children and family members. Indeed, while both men and women reported a relatively equal participation in decision making on most family matters, most families reported men to be the one who has the final say in more important matters relating to land and housing and purchasing valuable assets, while women are in charge of daily matters.

Nevertheless, the tendency towards more gender equality in the division of labor and decision



making in the family is getting clearer, especially among men and women of younger age groups, with higher educational levels.

### **Son preference**

Given the likelihood of the transfer of women to other families within which they provide caregiving to parents-in-law, it was not surprising to find that biological parents preferred sons. After all, sons tended to stay with their families and could benefit the family by bringing in additional family caregivers to provide labor and services. The son preference, however, is a complicated phenomenon, as different answers painted different pictures. In the self-reported attitudes, Vietnamese men and women displayed gender and women-affirmative attitudes regarding the roles of men and women in carrying on family lineage. However, more than a quarter of women and men preferred to have a son, and a significantly smaller proportion of women and men preferred to have a daughter. It is worth noting that approximately 3% of the surveyed population reported they used specific measures to ensure the birth of a son.

Despite the fact that “son preference” was still open for debate, women internalized gender norms that require only sons to carry on the family lineage. Women were more likely to prefer sons due to their potential capacity to provide financial support. When daughters were preferred, it was their capacity to provide emotional support to their parents that was deemed desirable. Moreover, women were more likely to report emotional support as a reason for daughter preference. Women also had similar ideas regarding their inheritance plans and tended to favor sons over daughters. Women said that their

preferred plans were based upon their own wishes, yet the question of how women come to make those plans is debatable since women tended to have relatively low levels of understanding when it came to laws on marriage and family, as well as gender equality. In other words, many women simply may not know that they can decide differently.

### **Political and social participation**

For Vietnamese women, family caregiving and role expectations limited their abilities to engage in activities outside the family. Indeed, women were even more likely than men to report family issues as a barrier for participation in political, social and community organizations. Among the surveyed population, women were less likely to participate in political activities, participated in activities in which they were involved less often, and were less likely to work in local authorities. Moreover, women were less likely to assume leadership roles in local government. This may be partly due to the fact that, although women believed in their decision-making capacities, they also internalized the cultural gender assumption that men are better for leadership positions.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

Family, a place where women thrived, can also put great limitations on women’s development in education, workforce participation, social-political participation, and even their sexual and family lives. As family caregivers, women sometimes lost their opportunities to fully participate in their education, careers, and other social and

political activities. As family caregivers, women relinquished leadership roles but provided care and support to their husbands, children, and family members on both sides. This care and support may even include satisfying their husbands' sexual needs at the expense of their own. Therefore, it may be concluded that the configurations of different

Vietnamese social institutions involving gender, family, education, workforce, and legal systems, in effect, limit Vietnamese women by assigning them great amounts of domestic work. Vietnam's society as a whole relies on the free domestic labor provided by women, sometimes at the expense of women's well-being and development.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

**To address gender inequality in Vietnam, it is crucial to liberate women from their endless domestic caregiver tasks without sacrificing the wellbeing of families. Policy intervention should:**

**1. Alter the traditional rigid gender attitudes on values and the roles of women. This includes a set of educational programs and activities for different target populations:**

- Public education to alter the traditional gender attitudes that rigidly confine women to the role of caregivers and to promote the perception that caring is a human attribute, and both men and women are capable of taking on this role. Public education should also promote the value of both son and daughter to reduce son preference and eliminate sex selection practices.
- Special programs targeting women to i) help them to be aware that their core value is not confined to caregiver roles; ii) inspire women's autonomy and assertiveness to take an active part in social and economic life; iii) encourage women to assume leadership roles, both within and outside family contexts.
- Promotion of men's caring role through nationwide campaigns to sensitize men, convincing them housework is also their responsibility, and a series of interactive communication programs with positive role models to motivate men to do housework and create awareness of their ability to handle this role just as well as women do.
- Pre-marriage counseling program for young

men and women to include sensitization of equal share of housework, including family planning and reproductive health, domestic violence and family related laws.

- Educating children on the equal sharing of housework and equipping boys and girls with skills for doing housework from an early age through formal and family education.

**2. Enforcing implementation of gender- and women-related laws. This should include:**

- Innovative and interactive educational program on gender-related laws including Law of Gender Equality, Law of Marriage and Family, Law of Control and Prevention of Domestic Violence and other laws to raise the public's awareness of legal rights and obligations of men and women in public and private spheres. For example, people should be aware that the housework done in the family by a spouse is regarded as income-generating labor as it is defined by the 2014 Law of Marriage and Family.
- Enforce implementation of the 2013 Land Law to ensure women's entitlement to land.
- Enforcing the implementation of the Civil Code on inheritance to promote equal share of family assets, especially land and housing as one measure to improve women's status and economic power.
- Applying paternity leave in both public and private sectors.
- Improve the coverage of social welfare and social security schemes for men and women working in the private, agricultural and

informal sector to ensure their access to their rights and benefits, especially women's rights and benefits related to their reproductive functions.

**3. Improve key social services to reduce the burden of housework.**

- Along with the educational program to promote the equal share of housework, it is important to support families through the provision of sufficient and quality services of childcare, health care and care for the elderly.

**4. Develop and implement a policy to facilitate access of women to career opportunities through professional training.**

- Women are less likely to be promoted or attend training or conferences, partly due to their caregiver roles in the family. Gender sensitive policy and strategy should be developed to ensure women get access to opportunities and encourage women to take these opportunities for their advancement.

**5. Further research**

- Vietnam is undergoing rapid social change, including changes in gender relations. Therefore updated and research-based evidence is needed to inform laws and policies and strengthen law enforcement in a timely fashion.
- There is a particular need for research to document more equitable gender practices that exist in various domains or in different regions across the country.
- So far, most of the efforts are oriented towards women at the absence of men. Yet gender equality will never be reached if men continue to refuse sharing the responsibility of domestic work, be dominant over decision making in both private and public spheres, and perpetuate violence against their partners. Therefore, research studies on men and masculinities are critically needed to help develop an informed and comprehensive policy intervention to promote positive behaviors and attitudes in men, thus contributing to address gender gaps, gender equality and the well-being of both men and women.



**Gender equality will never be reached** if men continue to refuse sharing the responsibility of domestic work, be dominant over decision making in both private and public spheres, and perpetuate violence against their partners.

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“ “ Women should be **sexually naïve and passive** in sexual relation to men.

“ “ Women often **choose to keep silent** due to the fear that they could lose more if they speak out.

“ “ “Gender must be understood as a **social structure**. It is not an expression of biology or a fixed dichotomy in human lives or character”.

“ “ Women are still responsible for **chores and caring work in the family**.

**Gender equality will never be reached** if men continue to refuse sharing the responsibility of domestic work, be dominant over decision making in both private and public spheres, and perpetuate violence against their partners.

“ “ Both men and women still **show little concern** about gender-related laws.

“ “ There are still many women who **undervalue their own capacities**.

“ “ “While in the North, only sons can continue family line and worship their ancestors, **daughters in the South can assume these roles.**”

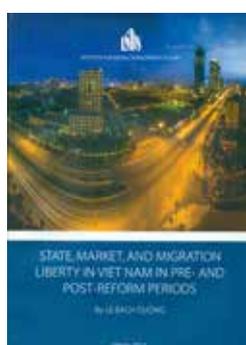
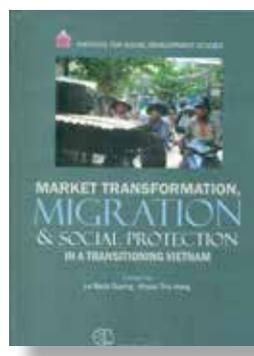
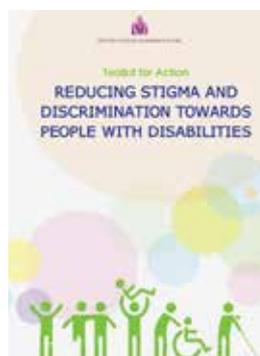
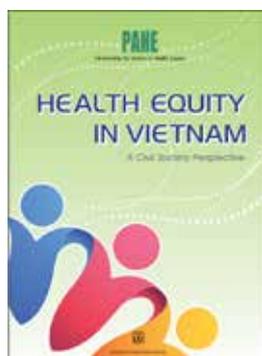
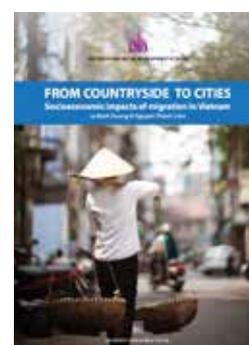
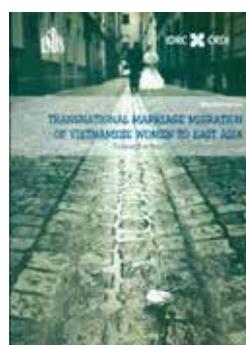
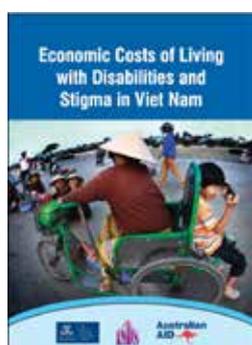
“ “ **A positive change** can be seen to be forming over time in people’s perception of the gender-based division of labor in the family.

“ “ people who are young and who have a **higher level of education** have a better perception on gender equality of men’s and women’s roles in the family.



## People with disabilities

## Migration and social protection



# SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

## of Gender Inequality in Vietnam

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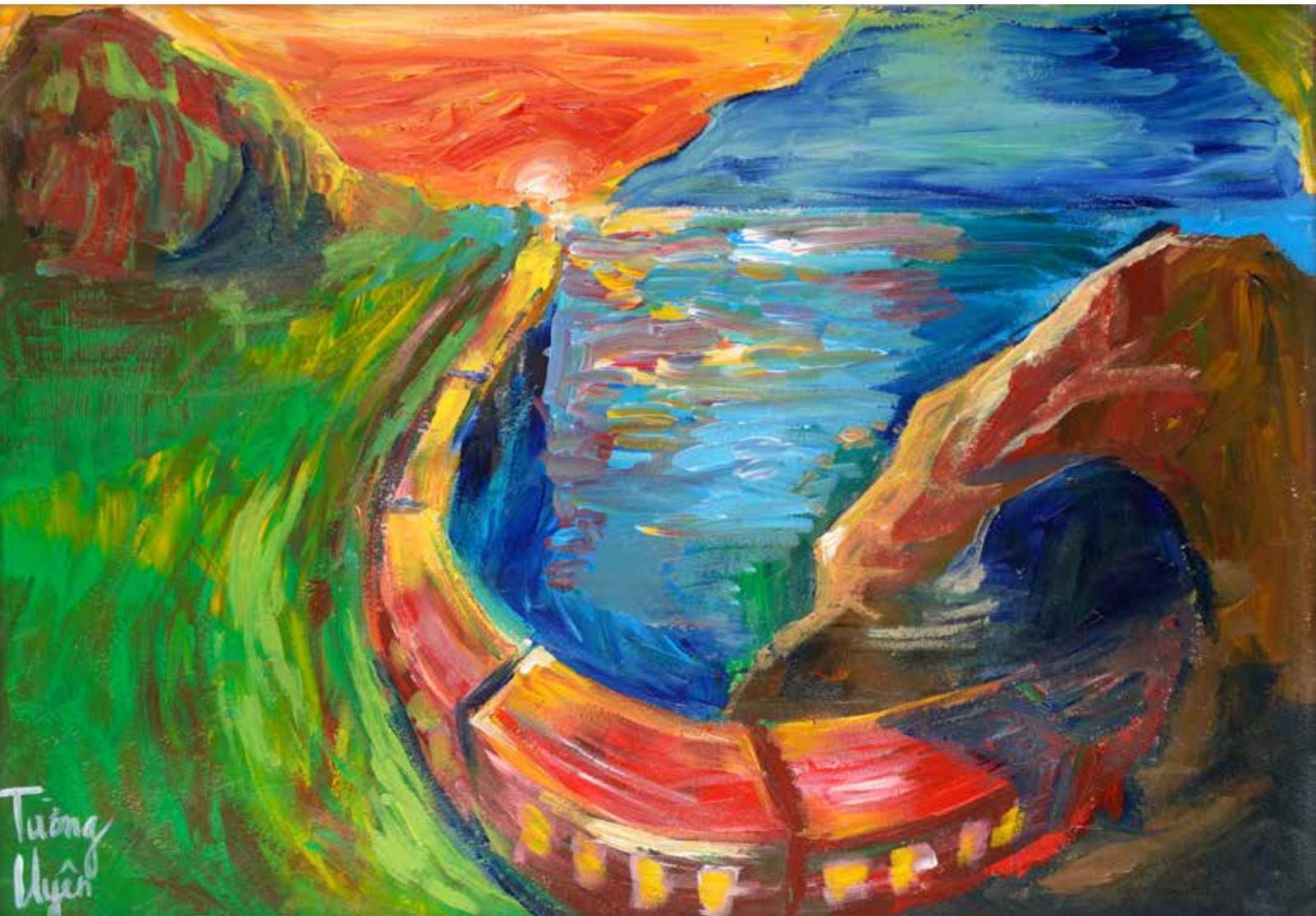
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