

VIETNAM — Country Profile

Overview

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is located in southeast Asia bordering the Peoples Republic of China to the north, the People's Democratic Republic of Laos and the Kingdom of Cambodia to the west, and the Pacific Ocean to the east. Vietnam lies in the hot region of the tropics. The climate is monsoon and subtropical in the North, which has four distinct seasons. Vietnam includes tropical rain forests, hills and mountains, and fertile agricultural land. The Red River Delta in the North and the Cuu Long River Delta in the South provide the main source of food for the whole country. The total population in 2002 was estimated to be around 79.7 million persons.

Source: *extracted from Vietnam Demographic & Health Survey (VDHS) 2002*

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Key findings from the 2002 VDHS on the situation of SRHR in Vietnam are as follows:

Maternal Health:

- The total fertility rate for the five-year period prior to the survey is only 1.9 children per woman.
- As in most countries, fertility is inversely related to women's education. Women who completed higher secondary school have the lowest fertility (1.4 children per woman) while those with no education have the highest fertility (2.8 per woman).
- Overall, one-fourth of births in the three years preceding the survey were reported as unplanned: 14 percent were mistimed (wanted later) and 9 percent were unwanted.
- The percentage of women who receive antenatal services from a doctor, nurse, or midwife, has increased from 71 percent in 1995-97 to 86 percent in 2000-02.
- There has also been a similar increase in the proportion of births for which the mother said she received two or more tetanus toxoid injections during pregnancy—from 55 to 71 percent.
- Breastfeeding is nearly universal in Vietnam; 98 percent of children are breastfed.
- Infant mortality has declined to 18 deaths per 1,000 births, while under-five mortality has declined to 24 per 1,000.

Contraception:

- Virtually all married women of reproductive age know of at least one method of contraception.
- The most widely known methods are the IUD (99 percent), the condom (96 percent), the pill (95 percent), female sterilization (92 percent), and male sterilization (90 percent).
- Eighty-six percent of current users obtain their family planning method from the public sector. By far the most important source of contraception is the commune health center (45 percent).
- Only 5 percent of currently married women in Vietnam have an unmet need for family planning services.
- Family planning services are widely available in Vietnam. Over 95 percent of married women live in communities served by both community-based distribution (CBD) workers and family planning fieldworkers.

- About two-thirds of married women live within one kilometer of a health facility that offers family planning services and over 90 percent live within five kilometers of such a facility.

Abortion:

- The practice of terminating unwanted pregnancies is legal and widely practiced in Vietnam.
- The total induced abortion rate shows a slight increase since 1997, from 0.5 to 0.6 abortions per woman.
- 22 percent of pregnancies in the three years prior to the survey were intentionally terminated either through menstrual regulation (17 percent) or induced abortion (5 percent).
- The total abortion rate for rural women (0.7) is higher than that of urban women (0.5).
- Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of pregnancy terminations occurred among women who were using contraception at the time of becoming pregnant. The percentage is higher for terminations by menstrual regulation (67 percent) than by abortion (54 percent).
- Half of all pregnancy terminations occurred among women using traditional methods, especially withdrawal (31 percent).
- About half of women reported having a health problem following a pregnancy termination. Of these women, 69 percent sought medical advice or treatment.

HIV & AIDS:

- Knowledge of AIDS is high among ever-married women in Vietnam (95 percent).
- Among women who know about AIDS, most are aware that condom use and having only one sexual partner are ways to reduce the risk of becoming infected with the virus.
- Almost four in five are aware that a healthy-looking person can have the AIDS virus, while 88 percent know that AIDS is a fatal disease.

Current initiatives in Vietnam

- ARROW and its partner Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP) in Vietnam continue to work towards **ICPD+25: Revitalising and implementing the Sexual and Reproductive Rights Agenda in the Asia Pacific Region**. This ICPD+25 monitoring and advocacy initiative aims to show the progress gaps and challenges towards ICPD implementation in Vietnam. In-depth monitoring is currently underway on the sexual and reproductive rights of marginalised populations in Vietnam.