

## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN VIETNAM: EVIDENCE FROM THE 2009 CENSUS

This factsheet presents key highlights of the current situation, trends and characteristics of people with disabilities in Viet Nam, based on the most recent Population and Housing Census (2009). It also summarizes policy implications and includes recommendations for appropriate strategies and programmes to reduce the vulnerability and improve the quality of life of people with disabilities in Viet Nam.

### ISSUES

Findings from the 2009 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census confirm that there are 6.1 million persons, or 7.8 per cent, of the population aged 5 years or older living with difficulty in at least one of the four functioning domains of vision, hearing, mobility, and cognition<sup>1,2</sup>. Persons experience one or more of these difficulties are considered to be living with a disability. Over the past years, Viet Nam has made stronger commitments to support persons with disabilities through Government's implementation of the National Action Plan for Supporting Persons with Disabilities for the period 2006-2010, Government's signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 and recently, the National Assembly's adoption of the Law on persons with disabilities which has been in effect since January 1st 2011.

However, persons with disabilities remain both socially and economically vulnerable. People with disabilities, especially at more severe levels, are vulnerable in almost all aspects of life, notably education, labour force participation, employment, and marriage, thus requiring considerable social support from the government.

### MAIN FINDINGS

#### 1. Disability is a predominant phenomenon among older people, especially older women

The prevalence of disability in each of the four life domains is presented in Figure 1. Problems encountered with vision were the most prevalent, followed by walking and cognition.<sup>3</sup> The prevalence of disability is slightly higher among females than males, and this is observed in all domains and irrespective of degrees of difficulty. The prevalence among females is 8.4 per cent while it is 7.0 per cent among males aged 5 or older.

As could be expected, disability is strongly associated with ageing. Compared to the non-disabled population or people without disabilities (PWOD), people with disabilities (PWD) are much older. The population

#### FACTS AND FIGURES

- 6.1 million people, or 7.8% of the population aged 5 years or older experience difficulty in at least one of four basic actions: seeing, hearing, walking and cognition.
- 75.7% of the total people with disabilities live in rural areas
- 43.3% of people aged 60 years or older have disabilities. Among them, the proportion of elderly females is higher than that of elderly males.
- The literacy rate of young people with disabilities aged 15 to 24 years is significantly lower than that of people without disabilities, i.e., 69.1% vs. 97.1%.
- The literacy ratio between women and men aged 15 to 24 years is 0.8 among people with disabilities and 0.6 among people with severe disabilities.
- In urban areas, unemployment rates among people without and with disabilities are 4.3% and 13.9% respectively.

1 The 2009 Census adopted the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) developed by the World Health Organization to measure health and disability.

2 In reality, the disability prevalence rate would be higher if more domains were included.

3 Cognition represents "remembering or concentrating" throughout this factsheet.

pyramids of the three groups of population in Figure 2 below show that the PWD and people with severe disabilities (PWSD) have much higher proportions of older people than PWOD group.

The mean age of PWD is 59 years compared to 30 years of PWOD. Out of the PWD population (6.1 million people), 3.3 million or 54.6 per cent, are aged 60 years or older. Among older PWD, the proportion of females is higher than that of males, i.e., 45.7 per cent vs. 39.9 per cent which is consistently illustrated in the population pyramids. This phenomenon is particularly true among PWSD.

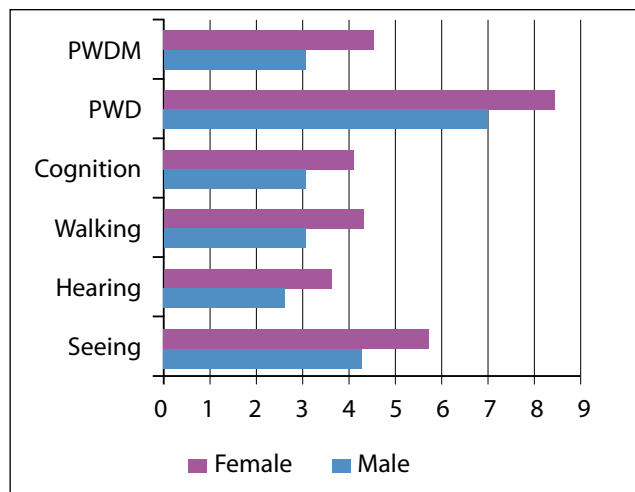


Figure 1: Prevalence of disability by domain and gender

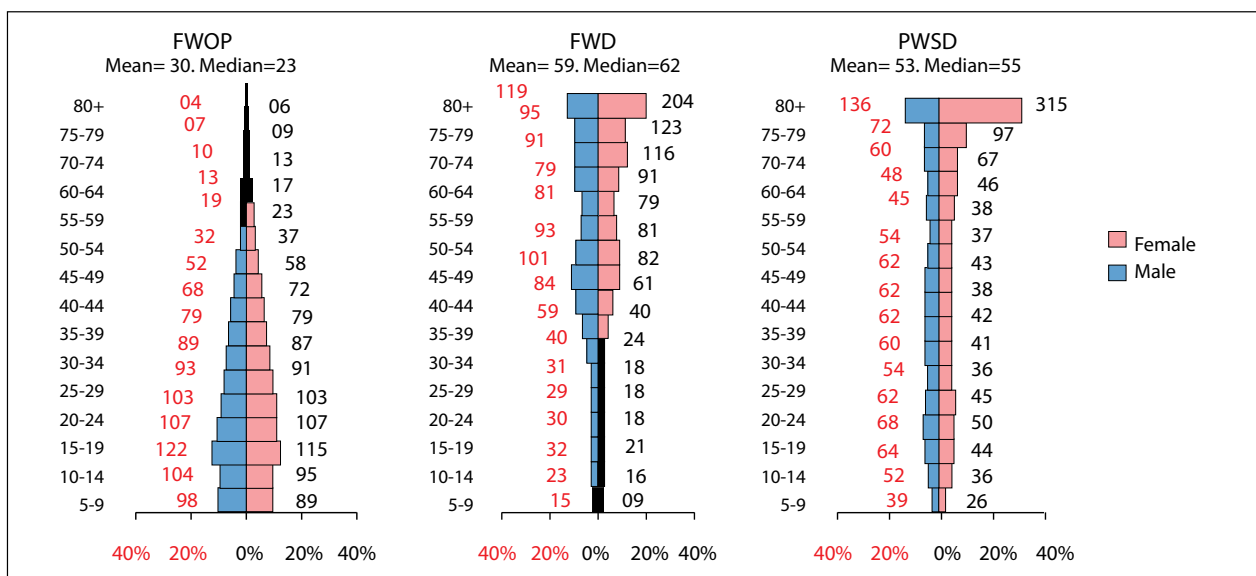


Figure 2: Population pyramids of disabled and non-disabled population

## 2. Significant disparities are prevalent in the incidence of disabilities among regions

People with disabilities are disproportionately prevalent in rural rather than urban areas and among geographical regions across the country. There are 4.6 million PWD or 75.7 per cent of the total PWD population living in rural areas. By region, the North and South Central Coast show the highest prevalence of disability (9.7 per cent), followed by the Red River Delta (8.1 per cent) and the Northern Midland and Mountainous region (8 per cent). The lowest prevalence of disability is in the Southeast region. The 2009 Census also shows a major variation by province with Thai Binh having the highest disability prevalence. Other provinces where 10 per cent or more of the population are PWD include Ha Tinh, Nghe An, Cao Bang, Ben Tre and Quang Ngai.

## 3. People with disabilities are dependant on family support while facing difficulties in marriage

Living alone or with fewer persons in the household is more common among adult<sup>4</sup> PWD than adult PWOD. Given their higher need for, but lower availability of, family care and support, difficulties and disadvantages facing PWD are amplified (Figure 3). The PWD experience greater difficulties and disruptions in marriage. The 'never married', widow, divorce/separated rates of adult PWD are greater as compared to adult PWOD.

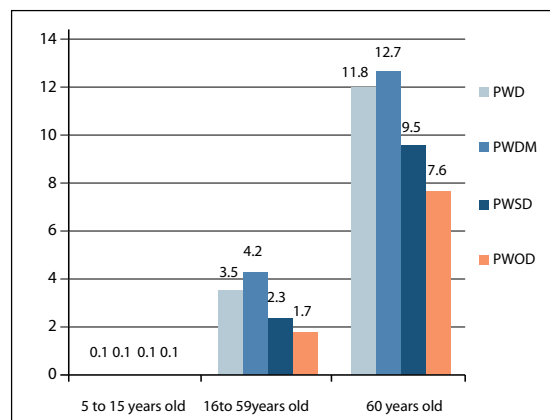


Figure 3: Proportion of people living alone by disability status and age

<sup>4</sup> People aged 16 or older

The 2009 Census data suggests that the older PWD place a greater demand on the government for social support because a significant proportion (i.e., 11.8 per cent) of them live alone.

#### 4. People with disabilities are vulnerable with regard to education

Results of the 2009 Census indicate lower values of PWD than those of PWOD in two, among others, key education indicators - literacy rate and school attendance rate. The literacy rate among adult PWD (76.3 per cent) is much lower than adult PWOD (95.2 per cent). This gap widens further as levels of difficulty increase. Youth<sup>5</sup> PWD experience greater disadvantages in education.

The youth literacy rate<sup>6</sup> of PWD is significantly lower than that of PWOD (69.1 per cent vs. 97.1 per cent).

The difference in literacy rates between PWD and PWOD is probably due to the fact that a much larger proportion of adult PWD, especially adult PWSD, never attend school. The proportions of adults never attending school among PWOD, PWD, and PWSD are 4.2 per cent, 19.2 per cent, and 45.6 per cent respectively. Findings on the difference in proportions of attending secondary and high school between children with and without disabilities are similar.

There is a disparity in literacy between women and men. The literacy ratio between women and men among youth PWD and PWSD are 0.8 and 0.6 respectively while generally it is 1 between women and men (Figure 4), indicating total equality, in this age group. These findings suggest that, while the country has generally made great progress in gender equality and women's empowerment, further efforts are needed to support gender equality among PWD.

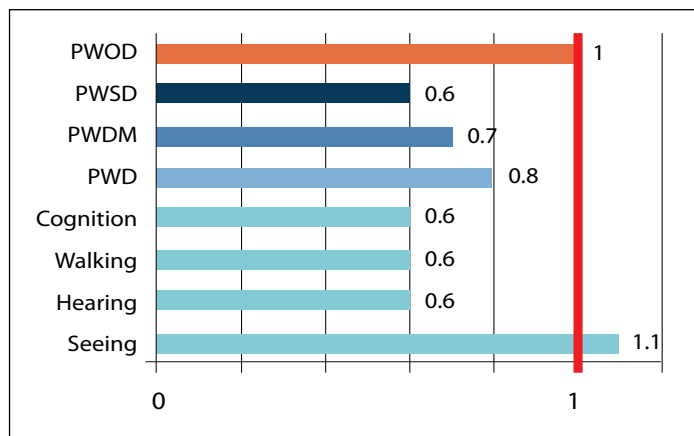


Figure 4: Ratio of literate women to men aged 15 to 24 years by disability status

#### 5. People with disabilities are vulnerable with regard to participation in the labour force

The PWD population has lower labour force participation rates and higher unemployment rates in both rural and urban areas. As the level of difficulties increase, the labour force participation rate reduces and, in turn, the unemployment rate rises. Labour force participation rates for PWOD, PWD, and PWSD are 82.7, 72.0, and 25.3 per cent respectively (Figure 5). In urban areas, unemployment rates for those groups are 4.3, 13.9, and 42.4 per cent respectively. Gender disparity in labour force participation and employment remains, but it is not significantly wide.

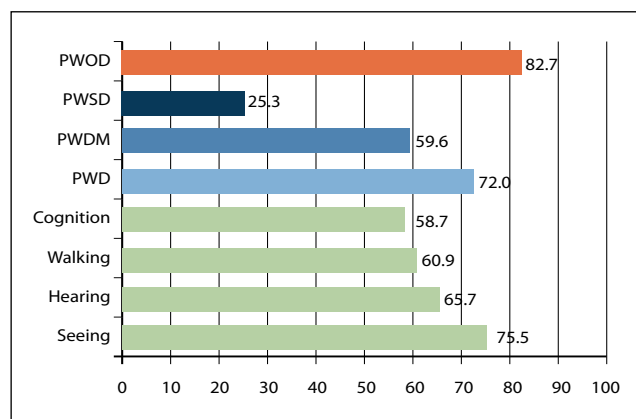


Figure 5: Labour force participation rate by disability status

#### 6. People with disabilities have slightly worse living conditions and standards than people without disabilities

The PWD have slightly worse housing conditions than PWOD; the proportion of PWD living in permanent housing (14.1 per cent) is lower than that of PWOD (17.4 per cent).<sup>7</sup> The PWD also have worse access to hygienic toilet facilities than PWOD; findings confirm 54.0 per cent of PWOD and 46.7 per cent of PWD have access to hygienic toilet facilities respectively. However, PWD and PWOD have equal access to safe water.

The 2009 Census shows that PWD experience worse household living standards<sup>8</sup> than PWOD. The proportion of PWD in the highest living standards quintile is 15.4 per cent while this rate is 21.1 per cent of PWOD. Similar

5 People aged 15 to 24 older

6 This is the eighth indicator of the MDGs. It is developed to measure the progress of Goal 2 of the MDGs on achieving Universal Primary Education

7 Note that this study classifies housing status by roof materials rather than the classification of the GS

8 Household living standards are assessed by dividing households into five quintiles or five levels of living standards (highest, high-to-middle, middle, low-to-middle, and lowest) using the classification developed by Guilmo: see GSO, 2011b for details.

differences between PWD and PWOD are found in the high-to-middle living standards quintile, whereas the reverse picture is the case in the low-to-middle and lowest living standards quintiles.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Findings from the 2009 Census indicate that more than half of the PWD are aged 60 years or older. This suggests enhancing support for older people with disabilities, especially females and those widowed and/or living alone, through delivery of more comprehensive disability programmes.
- The PWD are more vulnerable than PWOD in education which manifests in lower literacy rates, fewer opportunities and shorter durations of study. This strongly suggests that an education strategy should be developed to include children with disabilities in schools and create more equal access to education for young people with disabilities. This strategy would increase opportunities for them to participate in the labour force.
- Since gender disparities are pronounced among people with disabilities in education, the Government of Viet Nam should put in place support systems to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly for women with disabilities.
- In April 2012, the Government issued the first ever legal guidelines for the implementation of the Law on Persons with Disabilities - Decree 28/2012/ND-CP. Proper implementation of this decree would relieve many of the difficulties experienced by this vulnerable group with regard to labour and employment, social protection, and access to public facilities.
- More data on disability should be collected through dedicated disability surveys to gain more comprehensive information on the prevalence, health conditions associated with disability, use of and need for services, quality of life, opportunities, and rehabilitation needs.

### Definitions

- People with disabilities (PWD) include those with 'some difficulty', 'a lot of difficulty', or 'cannot do it at all' in at least one of the four functioning domains: vision, hearing, mobility and cognition.
- People with disabilities in multiple domains (PWDM) include those with 'some difficulty', 'a lot of difficulty', or 'cannot do it at all' in more than one functioning domain.
- People with severe disabilities (PWSD) include those who 'cannot do it at all' in at least one of the four functioning domains.
- People without disabilities (PWOD) include those who have 'no difficulty' in any of the four functioning domains.

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