



# Youth Transitions: Skills, Work, and Family Formation:

## Preliminary Findings from the 2016 Young Lives Survey (Round 5): Viet Nam

This fact sheet presents findings from the fifth round of the Young Lives survey of children in Viet Nam in 2016. Young Lives has followed two cohorts of children since 2002, a Younger Cohort born in 2001-02 and an Older Cohort born in 1994-95. This fact sheet focuses on issues related to the educational attainment, work and work-related skills, and marital status of the Older Cohort (aged 22 in 2016).

By 2016, the majority of 22-year-olds in our sample had moved out of school and into work. In addition, about one in five young men and two in five young women had married or started cohabiting by the time of the Round 5 survey. In terms of education, work-related skills, and usage of digital devices and internet, ethnic minority youth and those whose caregivers had little or no schooling have less favourable outcomes than their peers. Moreover, our data show that while a large majority of 22-year-olds in our sample were employed outside agriculture, ethnic minority young people are most likely to be self-employed in the agricultural sector.

### Key Findings

- Over 60% of 22-year-olds in our sample completed upper secondary education, and more than half of those went on to post-secondary institutions, universities and colleges.
- About half of the 22-year-olds have used a computer, laptop or tablet weekly in the past year. Over 80% accessed the internet weekly too.
- In 2016, over 90% of the 22-year-olds who were not at school, were working. Of this group, eight out of 10 were employed outside agriculture, (seven as employed workers and one self-employed). Among the ethnic minority youth, however, two-thirds were employed in agriculture and were mostly self-employed.
- By the age of 22, slightly over 40% of young women were married or cohabiting with partners, while the corresponding figure for young men is less than 20%.
- In 2016, nearly 75% of 22-year-olds were exclusively working, as few as 6% were exclusively studying, slightly under 10% were combining both activities, and 10% were in neither work or education.

## The policy context for young people in Viet Nam

The exposure of Viet Nam's economy to global competition has presented a big challenge for youth in the labour market. The unemployment rate for 15–24 year olds in Viet Nam is about five times that for the older segment of the labour force (GSO, 2014). For the second quarter of 2017, over 575,000 young people were unemployed, of whom 183,000 (32%) held university degrees (Tien Phong, 2017).<sup>1</sup>

There are strong debates in Viet Nam about the incoherence between the education system and the labour market. On the one hand, students perform remarkably well in cognitive tests (for example in the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment*, PISA, in 2012 for 15-year-old students). On the other hand, there are official reports that labour productivity in Viet Nam is among the lowest in the Asia-Pacific region (Tran, 2017). Skills mismatch is perhaps the biggest challenge for youth in the Vietnamese labour market (EU-OECD, 2017). The situation of youth in the job market is a priority on the governmental agenda. The *Vietnam Youth Development Strategy 2011–2020* (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2012), ratified by the Prime Minister in December 2011, set out a target for the creation of 600,000 new jobs annually for young people. Another major target is that by the end of 2020, 70% of young people in the labour force will have been trained.

In terms of family formation, Vietnamese law requires women to be at least aged 18 and men at least aged 20 before marrying. Over the first decade of the 21st century, the mean age of (first) marriage was rising for men and was stable for women. In 2009, the mean age of first marriage was 26.2 years for men and 22.8 years for women. Child marriage, however, is practiced in some ethnic minority groups, including the H'Mong<sup>2</sup> and is more prevalent in the Northern Uplands area, the Mekong River Delta, and Central Highlands (Nguyen, 2012, MICS 2014). In response, the government has made many efforts to address child marriage, and in 2015 the Prime Minister approved the National Programme to address child marriage among ethnic minorities.

## Education and job-related training

At the age of 22, 16% of the Older Cohort were enrolled in educational institutions. At this age, over 60% have completed upper secondary education and 33% have moved on to post-secondary schools, colleges, and universities (Table 1). Notably, young women were more likely to continue their studies after completing upper secondary (41%) than young men (25%), as well as young people from the Kinh ethnic majority group (36%) as compared to those from ethnic minority groups (15%). The caregivers' level of schooling is strongly associated with the likelihood of completing or attending tertiary education.

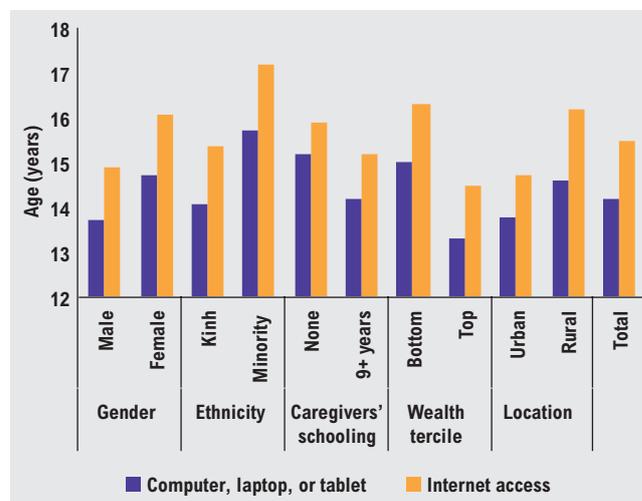
The latest survey also reveals that 18% of the 22-year-olds have pursued job-related training in addition to their formal education, 30% of whom received training with certification. There are no differences in terms of the number of young women and men who received training. However, there are substantial differences in terms of ethnic origin – where 20% of 22-year-olds from the Kinh ethnic majority received training as opposed to only 5% of 22-year-olds from ethnic minority groups, and differences in terms of caregivers' level of education – where only 1% of young people whose caregiver had no schooling received skills training in comparison with 22% of young people whose caregivers had nine or more years of schooling.

## Digital devices and internet use

Technology adoption has been on the rise in Viet Nam. About half of the 22-year-olds reported having used a computer, a laptop, or a tablet at least once a week during the past 12 months. The rate for accessing the internet weekly is over 80% and is closely connected to the use (and ownership) of smartphones. The digital gap is noticeable for minority ethnic groups, who are much less likely on a weekly basis to use all the different devices (20%) and the internet (48%) than ethnic majority young people (55% and 88%, respectively). Similarly, young people whose caregivers are less educated and those from the poorest households are less likely to use digital devices than others (Table 1).

Although the use of computers, laptops and tablets is less common among 22-year-olds than accessing the internet, the age at which young people used any of the devices for the first time is lower than the age for accessing the internet (Figure 1). There are differences in terms of gender with young men tending to start using digital devices at a slightly younger age than young women. Also, young people from ethnic minority groups and those living in rural locations started using the devices at an older age than young people from the Kinh majority and those living in urban locations respectively.

**Figure 1.** Age of first use of computing devices and internet access



<sup>1</sup> Tien Phong Newspaper

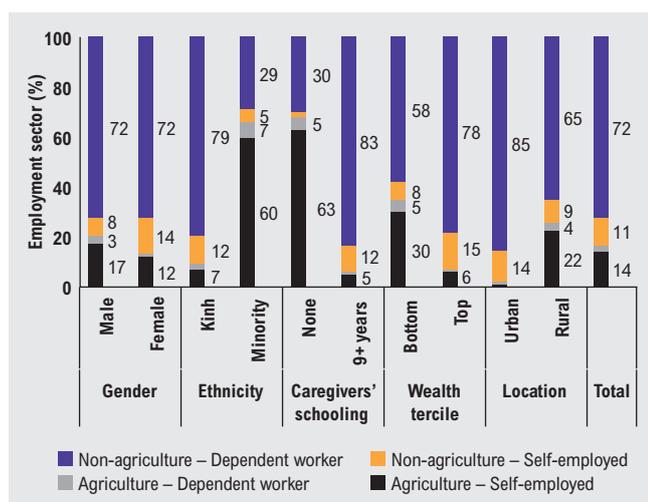
<sup>2</sup> H'Mong is the largest ethnic minority group in the Young Lives survey. Early marriage is far more common among H'Mong than in the wider population in Viet Nam.

## Employment status

Of the 22-year-olds who were not at school in 2016, 90% reported they had been employed in the past 12 months, with far higher proportions of young people living in rural areas (94%) than those living in urban areas (88%) and those living in the Mekong River Delta region (88%) (Table 1). Among employed youth, 83% were employed outside agriculture, with 72% as employees and 11% self-employed) (Figure 2). Of the ethnic minority youth who were employed (98%), however, 67% worked in agriculture and were in the large majority self-employed (60%). Fewer than 5% of the ethnic minority were self-employed outside agriculture.

The caregivers' level of education is an important predictor of the sectors in which the Young Lives youth were employed: 63% of the 22-year-olds whose caregivers had no education were self-employed, working in agriculture, whereas 83% of those whose caregivers had nine or more years of education were dependent workers in sectors outside agriculture. Region of origin is also important; in the previous 12 months, 42% of 22-year-olds in Northern Uplands worked for themselves in agriculture. On the other hand, over 90% of those from the Red River were employed outside agriculture.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 2. Employment sector in 2016



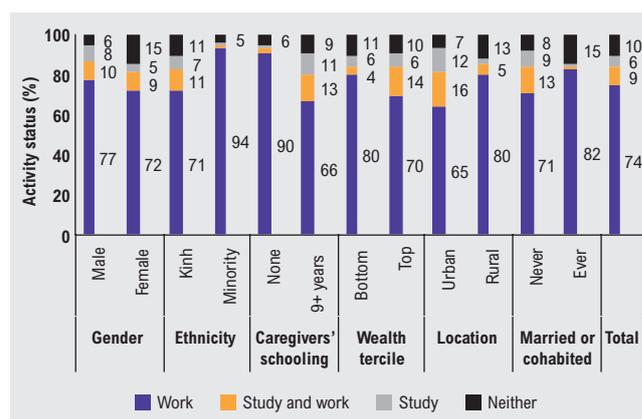
Notes: unit in percent; data labels do not display if under 3 per cent

## Activity status

The data show that 74% of youth were exclusively working in 2016, and nearly 10% combined study with work. It is noticeable that the small proportion of young people exclusively studying (6%) is lower than the proportion of young people neither working nor studying (10%).

Exclusively working seems to be more prevalent among the ethnic minority youth and 22-year-olds whose caregivers had no schooling. Exclusively studying (without having to work), on the other hand, is more common among youth of highly educated caregivers.

Figure 3. Activity status of 22-year-olds



Results of reports by the 22-year-olds on their activities in the week preceding the Young Lives Survey.<sup>4</sup> Unit in percent; data labels do not display if under 3 percent.

## Marriage and fertility

By the age of 22, 43% of young women have married or started cohabiting with a partner, while the corresponding figure for the young men is 19%. The same patterns hold for fertility, as a third of young women had had a child by the time of the Round 5 survey in 2016, compared to 13% of young men. As shown in Figure 3, very few of the young people who were married or cohabiting are still studying (under 3%) at 22 years of age while 82% were working.

## Conclusions

Among the 22-year-olds in our sample, 60% had completed upper secondary education or higher and about half of these moved on to higher education. Of the 22-year-olds who were not at school, a large majority was working. Overall, more than 90% of young people reported having been employed in the last 12 months – mostly outside agriculture and as dependent workers – and nearly three-quarters reported having worked in the past seven days while not being enrolled in any educational institution (i.e. they were exclusively working). The data also show that over 40% of women and under 20% of men have married or started cohabiting and they were, in 2016, more likely than other groups to be neither working or studying.

Ethnic minority youth and those whose caregivers had no schooling have not only achieved lower levels of education but also are less likely to have received job-related training. This same group have less access to digital devices and are more likely to be self-employed in the agricultural sector, and therefore have fewer opportunities to prosper.

Evidence from this survey supports the government's on-going programmes targeting poor communities, especially those with a high concentration of ethnic minorities. Our data show the importance of reducing the inequality between demographic groups, particularly in education and job training. Furthermore, it is necessary to make job creation for youth an important part of programmes working on poverty reduction.

<sup>3</sup> The percentage figures are based on the numbers of young people working in 2016.

<sup>4</sup> The discussion on employment in the previous section concerns work in the previous 12 months.

**Table 1. Labour market participation, education, training and digital skills of 22-year-olds in 2016**

|                              | Education, training and skills (%) |                           |                                    |                                       |                               | Not work   | Employment (%) |                 |                 |                  | Usage of digital devices at least once a week (%) |             |                            |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|---|-------------|----------------------------|
|                              | In schools                         | Completed Upper Secondary | Completed/attending post-secondary | Complete/attending university/college | Received job-related training |            | Agriculture    |                 | Non-agriculture |                  | Computer, laptop, or tablet                       | Internet    | Mobile phone with internet |
|                              |                                    |                           |                                    |                                       |                               |            | Self-employed  | Employed worker | Self-employed   | Dependent worker |   |             |                            |
| <b>Gender</b>                |                                    |                           |                                    |                                       |                               |            |                |                 |                 |                  |   |             |                            |
| Male                         | 17.2                               | 30.5                      | 6.4                                | 18.5                                  | 17.9                          | 6.9        | 15.9           | 3.1             | 7.2             | 66.9             | 53.8  | 80.3        | 80.5                       |
| Female                       | 14.4                               | 26.1                      | 7.8                                | 33.2                                  | 17.8                          | 9.4        | 10.8           | 1.6             | 12.6            | 65.7             | 48.1  | 81.7        | 84.4                       |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>             |                                    |                           |                                    |                                       |                               |            |                |                 |                 |                  |   |             |                            |
| Kinh                         | 17.5                               | 30.6                      | 7.2                                | 29.0                                  | 19.9                          | 9.2        | 6.3            | 1.7             | 10.9            | 72.0             | 55.4  | 87.2        | 87.9                       |
| Minority                     | 3.7                                | 11.9                      | 6.4                                | 8.3                                   | 4.6                           | 1.8        | 58.7           | 6.4             | 4.6             | 28.4             | 20.2  | 40.4        | 47.7                       |
| <b>Caregiver's education</b> |                                    |                           |                                    |                                       |                               |            |                |                 |                 |                  |   |             |                            |
| None                         | 4.9                                | 11.0                      | 2.4                                | 2.4                                   | 1.2                           | 1.2        | 62.2           | 4.9             | 2.4             | 29.3             | 14.6  | 36.6        | 45.1                       |
| 1-4 years                    | 6.7                                | 19.3                      | 3.3                                | 15.3                                  | 13.3                          | 7.3        | 13.3           | 4.7             | 10.0            | 64.7             | 37.3  | 70.0        | 74.0                       |
| 5-8 years                    | 12.4                               | 34.5                      | 8.0                                | 19.3                                  | 19.7                          | 7.6        | 9.2            | 2.8             | 12.0            | 68.3             | 43.0  | 86.3        | 85.1                       |
| 9+ years                     | 24.6                               | 31.6                      | 9.3                                | 41.7                                  | 22.3                          | 10.7       | 4.3            | 0.3             | 10.4            | 74.2             | 71.0  | 92.8        | 93.6                       |
| <b>Wealth tercile</b>        |                                    |                           |                                    |                                       |                               |            |                |                 |                 |                  |   |             |                            |
| Bottom                       | 10.1                               | 19.6                      | 7.2                                | 16.3                                  | 13.0                          | 8.0        | 27.5           | 4.3             | 7.2             | 52.9             | 34.4  | 63.8        | 69.2                       |
| Middle                       | 16.8                               | 31.4                      | 5.4                                | 30.7                                  | 21.4                          | 8.6        | 6.1            | 1.8             | 9.3             | 74.3             | 55.7  | 89.3        | 89.3                       |
| Top                          | 20.3                               | 33.6                      | 8.9                                | 31.7                                  | 19.2                          | 8.1        | 5.9            | 0.7             | 13.7            | 71.6             | 62.4  | 90.0        | 89.3                       |
| <b>Location</b>              |                                    |                           |                                    |                                       |                               |            |                |                 |                 |                  |   |             |                            |
| Urban                        | 28.8                               | 39.2                      | 7.8                                | 32.6                                  | 20.1                          | 11.9       | 0.9            | 0.3             | 11.9            | 74.9             | 67.4  | 93.1        | 90.3                       |
| Rural                        | 7.5                                | 21.3                      | 6.7                                | 22.1                                  | 16.6                          | 5.9        | 20.9           | 3.6             | 8.9             | 60.7             | 40.2  | 73.4        | 77.7                       |
| <b>Rural regions</b>         |                                    |                           |                                    |                                       |                               |            |                |                 |                 |                  |   |             |                            |
| N. Uplands                   | 7.7                                | 21.9                      | 9.7                                | 17.4                                  | 6.5                           | 9.7        | 38.1           | 1.3             | 11.0            | 40.0             | 44.5  | 65.2        | 71.6                       |
| Red River                    | 20.4                               | 29.6                      | 4.9                                | 38.9                                  | 23.5                          | 4.3        | 6.2            | 1.2             | 8.0             | 80.2             | 74.7  | 94.4        | 96.3                       |
| Coastal Rural                | 7.6                                | 21.0                      | 11.4                               | 15.2                                  | 19.0                          | 5.7        | 21.9           | 9.5             | 11.4            | 51.4             | 48.6  | 73.3        | 77.1                       |
| Mekong Delta                 | 5.4                                | 21.7                      | 3.9                                | 16.3                                  | 16.3                          | 11.6       | 10.9           | 3.9             | 8.5             | 65.1             | 58.1  | 80.6        | 83.7                       |
| <b>All young people</b>      | <b>15.7</b>                        | <b>28.2</b>               | <b>7.1</b>                         | <b>26.2</b>                           | <b>17.9</b>                   | <b>8.2</b> | <b>13.2</b>    | <b>2.3</b>      | <b>10.0</b>     | <b>66.3</b>      | <b>50.8</b>                                       | <b>80.0</b> | <b>82.6</b>                |

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The images throughout our publications are of children living in circumstances and communities similar to the children without our study sample © Young Lives



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