

# Foreword

Population ageing – or the median age of a population increasing due to lower fertility rates and greater life expectancy – is unquestionably an outstanding accomplishment of the modern era.

I was born in Japan in 1952. According to the government, the total fertility rate of my birth year was as high as 2.98 children per woman in Japan – more than 2 million babies were my contemporaries. The under-five mortality rate was high, at 79.0 per 1,000 live births, and male life expectancy measured a rather low 61.90 years.

Yet in 2019 – only 67 years after my birth – Japan’s total fertility rate dropped by more than half, to 1.36 children per woman, or a total of about 865,000 births per year. The under-five mortality rate fell drastically to 2.7 per 1,000 live births, and the average life expectancy of a man had grown almost 20 years, to 81.41 years. As a result of this demographic transition, the proportion of those aged 60 years or more represented about 34.4% of Japan’s population.

Although my home country is an extreme example of population ageing, this trend is occurring worldwide, thanks to improved public health and the rapid progress of science. Because population demographics have changed so substantially within a relatively short duration – until a few centuries ago, one in four babies perished before their fifth birthdays, for example. The international community has identified population ageing as a critical issue. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, called for ‘changes in attitudes, policies and practices’ to fulfill ‘the enormous potential of ageing.’ Moreover, as statistics show that Asia has the most rapidly ageing population in the world – both in terms of the number of older people as well as the proportion of older people in the population’ – the promotion of healthy, active and productive ageing’ is ‘key to the well-being of older persons as valuable members of the family, community, and society,’ as recognised by ASEAN Member States in the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing: Empowering Older Persons in ASEAN.

An international organisation mandated to promote policy recommendations for ASEAN Member States on economic integration, narrowing income gaps, and sustainable development, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) is working to help fulfill the Kuala Lumpur declaration.

In 2017, ERIA received a contribution from the Government of Japan to research and to develop policy recommendations related to population ageing and long-term care, in line with its Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative launched in 2016. ERIA subsequently created a network of activities to promote a policymaking process aimed at healthy, active, and productive ageing, including conducting various studies of older people in ASEAN Member States in collaboration with its partner organisations.

Viet Nam's pace of population ageing is amongst the fastest in the world, demonstrating the country's undeniable success in improving its health care services and systems, and that rising life expectancy is not necessarily correlated with higher economic status. Indeed, Viet Nam could become the leader of policy development in promoting healthy, active, and productive ageing in the world.

The following report, the Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in Viet Nam (LSAHV) aims to reveal the realities faced by older people in Viet Nam – health statuses, health care utilisation, economic well-being, use of information technology, social isolation, and care – as a step towards this goal. The next stage of this report, planned for 2021, aims to further analyse the longitudinal data contained within, including specific factors that have contributed to the improvement of health in Viet Nam to further evaluate and model this country's healthy and active ageing.

We owe the success of this report to the hard work and leadership of Dr. Vu Cong Nguyen, Deputy Director, Institute of Population, Health and Development (PHAD). I also wish to express my appreciation to the staff of PHAD for their outstanding work on this project.

This study would not have been realised without the strong support of the General Statistics Office and the General Office for Population and Family Planning of the Ministry of Health, Government of Viet Nam. In addition, local authorities' support

enabled this study to be implemented smoothly; it is my understanding that this study was also used as a training opportunity for the enumerators of the 2019 census. It is my hope that this study contributes to the improved data quality of this important national survey. A remarkable 96% response rate attests both to the great success of field supervisors and interviewers in collecting high-quality data, and good public understanding of the importance of social surveys. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all government officials involved at both national and local government levels and I am thankful for the great success of field supervisors and interviewers in collecting high-quality data.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the valuable advice provided by the LSAHV Advisory Committee. Its continued support is greatly appreciated.

Finally, I also cannot fail to recognise the respondents to this study: mothers, fathers, and grandparents. Caregivers and/or children of selected respondents were also interviewed; their kind cooperation enabled more comprehensive analysis and understanding of the realities that older people face every day.

Population ageing is a mark of success in today's complicated world, and further improving the health of all populations remains the most important target. It is my hope that information from this report, shared so generously by Viet Nam, will be fully utilised by all stakeholders – governments, international organisations, academia, civil organisations, and the private sector – toward the ultimate goal of healthy, active, and productive ageing throughout Asia – and beyond.



Professor Hidetoshi Nishimura  
President, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia

# Message

Viet Nam is facing a rapidly ageing population that will affect many aspects of society including health, social security, socio-cultural activities, family structure, and the labour market. The Vietnamese Government is actively developing appropriate policies for the ageing population in Viet Nam. The Ministry of Health also has many policies on medical examination, treatment, and improving health care services for the elderly in Viet Nam.

The 2018 Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in Viet Nam (LSAHV) is the very first longitudinal study on ageing in the country. The research is well designed and has contributions by researchers from Viet Nam and Japan. The General Statistics Office of Viet Nam is also involved in sampling design to produce results representative of the ecological regions in Viet Nam. A total of 6,050 people aged 60 and over in 10 provinces of Viet Nam were randomly selected and invited to participate in the study.

The baseline survey of this study provides rich information on the health status, general well-being, and other social aspects of the elderly in Viet Nam.

I have read the report and found a lot of interesting information. The report presents quite a comprehensive overview of the health status indicators of the elderly, including 1) indicators related to physical health (height, weight, blood pressure, walking ability, balance, lung capacity, muscle distribution, body fat, and water ..); 2) mental health indicators (smoking, drinking, sleep disorders, anxiety, religious activities); 3) social health indicators (friend relationships, children, social associations) and much other valuable information. I believe that the findings of the LSAHV are very useful information for the doctors, hospital managers, heads of health authorities, social workers, consultants of intervention projects for the elderly, and policymakers in healthcare and social support for the elderly in Viet Nam.

I would like to send my compliments to the research team of the Institute of Population, Health and Development and NIHON University, Japan for successfully coordinating the baseline of this study. I also expect a successful next round, which will be conducted in 2021, for a better understanding of the health-related issues of the ageing population in Viet Nam.

A handwritten signature in black ink, written in a cursive style, positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

Professor Dr Nguyen Quoc Trieu  
Former Minister of Health  
Former Chairman of Ha Noi People's Committee  
Former Head of Department of Health Protection and Care for  
Central Party's Officials