

**Table 4: Living arrangements of the Vietnamese population  
(Percentages across demographic categories)**

	1992/93	1997/98	2002	2004
<b>Percentage of Total Population Living in Each Type of Household</b>				
No Elderly	67.77%	65.99%	70.03%	68.78%
Elderly Head with Nonelderly	18.78%	18.4%	19.62%	20.18%
Dependent Elderly	12.3%	13.75%	8.64%	8.99%
Only Elderly	1.14%	1.86%	1.72%	2.05%
<b>Percentage of Elderly Living in Each Type of Household</b>				
Elderly Head with Nonelderly	59.36%	54.92%	63.39%	61.61%
Dependent Elderly	27.21%	27%	18.04%	17.72%
Only Elderly	13.43%	18.39%	18.57%	20.67%
<b>Percentage of Elderly Living in Each Type of Household (More Detail)</b>				
Only One Elderly Person	3.47%	4.93%	5.29%	5.62%
Only Elderly Married Couple	9.48%	12.73%	12.48%	14.41%
Other Group of Only Elderly	0.49%	0.73%	0.8%	0.63%
Elderly Spouse of Nonelderly	2.59%	2.26%	2.59%	2.28%
Elderly Head, Unmarried Son	6.64%	7.12%	7.14%	8.23%
Elderly Head, Married Son	9.82%	10.67%	15.91%	4.11%
Elderly Head, Unmarried Daughter	6.4%	5.5%	7.2%	5.99%
Elderly Head, Married Daughter	1.42%	1.41%	2.23%	1.3%
Elderly Head with Multiple Children	27.8%	23.62%	23.5%	35.54%
Elderly Head, Other Situation	4.69%	4.34%	4.81%	4.53%
Elderly Dependent, Unmarried Son	1.03%	0.91%	0.45%	0.27%
Elderly Dependent, Married Son	17.73%	17.59%	14.27%	13.3%
Elderly Dependent, Unmarried Daughter	1.95%	2.3%	0.9%	0.79%
Elderly Dependent, Married Daughter	1.03%	1.53%	1.2%	1.43%
Elderly Dependent, Grandchildren	0.68%	0.74%	0.82%	1.09%
Elderly Dependent, Other Situation	4.79%	3.63%	0.41%	0.49%
<b>Only ONE Elderly Person (Living Alone)</b>				
Male	15.49%	18.4%	24.32%	18.84%
Female	84.51%	81.6%	75.68%	81.16%
Rural	80%	82.91%	82.85%	77.94%
Urban	20%	17.09%	17.15%	22.06%

Source: Authors' calculation from VLSS 1992/93 & 1997/98, and VHLSS 2002 & 2004

#### 4.2. Family structure of elderly households

Table 4 provides information about household living arrangements in the surveys. About 70 percent of the population lived in nonelderly households, and the remaining 30 percent lived in elderly households. The majority of elderly lived in households where an elderly person was the household head (over 60 percent). In those households, it would be more reasonable to think of children as more dependent on their elderly parents, than vice versa. The fact that many households with an elderly head still had multiple children living at home supports this argument.

**Figure 2: Living arrangements of the elderly households, 1992/93 & 2004**



Source: Authors' calculation from VLSS 1992/93 and VHLSS 2004

A potentially worrisome trend, meanwhile, is what appears to be a shift over time from households with dependent elderly to only elderly households. The percentage of the elderly living as dependents declined from 27.21 percent in 1992/93 to 17.72 percent in 2004, while the corresponding elderly living in only elderly households increased from 13.43 percent to 20.67 percent in the same period. Figure 2 shows this situation in graphical terms, illustrating that the percentage of dependent elderly was squeezed at all ages.

Meanwhile, the percentage of elderly in the one-person elderly households grew from 3.47 percent in 1992/93 to 5.62 percent in 2004. This situation was prevalent among female and rural residents. For instance, about 80 percent of the elderly who lived alone were female, and also 80 percent of them lived in

**Table 5: Working status of the Vietnamese population**  
(Percentage of individuals engaging in work across demographic categories,  
for those aged 20 and older)

	1992/93 VLSS		1997/98 VLSS		2002 VLSS		2004 VLSS		
	Age	20 – 59	60+	20 – 59	60+	20 – 59	60+	20 – 59	60+
<b>Region</b>									
Red River Delta	85.8%	43.4%	89.7%	51.1%	92.5%	47.7%	91.9%	48.4%	
North East	90.1%	44.2%	91.6%	42.6%	94.9%	49.3%	93.5%	51.4%	
North West	89.3%	48.6%	93.3%	53.7%	96.3%	45.5%	96.1%	46.9%	
North Central Coast	89.2%	58.7%	91.1%	51.6%	94.3%	51.7%	90.8%	48.2%	
South Central Coast	82.2%	36.8%	87.9%	51.0%	91.8%	58.9%	89.5%	54.6%	
Central Highlands	91.0%	51.2%	94.4%	45.6%	94.7%	50.3%	92.0%	39.5%	
South East	76.0%	34.9%	78.6%	33.6%	85.3%	26.2%	83.6%	28.3%	
Mekong River Delta	82.3%	44.1%	85.7%	43.7%	90.0%	41.3%	88.7%	38.8%	
<b>Urban / Rural Status</b>									
Rural	86.0%	47.4%	90.2%	50.0%	94.2%	50.5%	92.7%	49.1%	
Urban	78.1%	32.2%	79.3%	33.5%	83.7%	28.0%	82.6%	29.8%	
<b>Marital Status</b>									
Married	85.2%	52.5%	90.0%	56.2%	94.9%	55.8%	94.0%	54.9%	
Widowed	76.5%	27.1%	80.8%	27.4%	86.8%	27.1%	86.5%	26.3%	
Otherwise Not Married	79.2%	38.1%	79.9%	49.8%	80.0%	52.1%	76.6%	40.0%	
<b>Gender</b>									
Male	86.5%	49.7%	88.8%	51.6%	93.5%	50.8%	92.1%	50.6%	
Female	81.2%	39.0%	86.1%	41.5%	89.6%	41.2%	87.6%	39.2%	
<b>Age Range</b>									
60 – 64		61.1%		66.3%		66.2%		64.5%	
65 – 69		48.8%		52.3%		57.4%		56.9%	
70 – 74		34.1%		38.5%		40.8%		39.8%	
75 – 79		19.5%		25.9%		26.0%		27.8%	
80 – 89		8.2%		8.7%		9.7%		10.1%	
90 and Older		0.0%		0.0%		3.2%		1.8%	
<b>Household Elderly / Nonelderly Mix</b>									
No Elderly	84.5%	---	87.9%	---	91.9%	---	90.3%	---	
Elderly Head with Nonelderly	78.9%	51.4%	83.8%	57.2%	88.9%	48.7%	86.9%	46.8%	
Dependent Elderly	86.5%	18.0%	89.9%	15.0%	92.7%	16.0%	90.7%	12.9%	
Only Elderly	---	60.7%	---	56.0%	---	62.1%	---	61.2%	

Source: Authors' calculation from VLSS 1992/93 & 1997/98, and VHLSS 2002 & 2004

rural areas. Given various social and economic disadvantages of the female elderly in comparison with their male counterparts, the situation calls for social policy makers to give more attention to effective social welfare policies for the elderly females, such as education and income generation (United Nations Development Programme, 2002).

Among the dependent elderly, over time the vast majority were found living with their married sons. There were significant differences between rural and urban areas regarding this situation: the percentage of dependent elderly living with a married son in rural areas remained the same, while it decreased

over time in urban areas. This difference could be explained by various reasons, including different characteristics of working and living styles between areas.

Table 4 also shows that this trend also held, but to a much lesser extent, in the households where an elderly person was the household head.

### 4.3. Working status and housework of elderly people

Table 5 shows information about the working status of the elderly. We can see that many elderly remained active, and they were working either for salary or for the household's agricultural and/or other enterprises. The average working rate was about 45 percent.

By area, rural dwellers had significantly higher working rates than did

**Table 6: Housework among the Vietnamese elderly**  
(Percentage of elderly engaging in housework across demographic categories, followed by mean hours of housework per day, conditional on doing housework)

Region	2002 VHLS		2004 VHLS	
	Engaging in Housework	Hours	Engaging in Housework	Hours
<b>Region</b>				
Red River Delta	72.5%	2.17	73.4%	2.20
North East	71.5%	2.09	75.2%	1.94
North West	65.4%	2.14	68.5%	1.81
North Central Coast	69.6%	2.11	71.1%	2.02
South Central Coast	71.5%	1.95	70.9%	1.96
Central Highlands	67.1%	2.30	63.3%	2.09
South East	57.9%	2.73	68.3%	2.40
Mekong River Delta	56.2%	2.35	57.9%	2.26
<b>Urban / Rural Status</b>				
Rural	68.6%	2.15	69.4%	2.32
Urban	58.2%	2.57	66.5%	2.10
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Married	70.6%	2.14	73.8%	2.10
Widowed	58.4%	2.40	59.5%	2.24
Otherwise Not Married	72.7%	2.42	78.1%	2.41
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	56.9%	1.87	60.1%	1.80
Female	73.2%	2.45	74.7%	2.36
<b>Age Range</b>				
60 – 64	81.4%	2.36	84.2%	2.39
65 – 69	74.5%	2.26	77.5%	2.15
70 – 74	67.7%	2.15	68.3%	2.04
75 – 79	56.2%	2.07	63.8%	1.85
80 – 89	31.3%	2.03	36.3%	1.97
90 and Older	17.7%	2.09	12.9%	1.62
<b>Household Elderly / Nonelderly Mix</b>				
Elderly Head with Nonelderly	66.6%	2.27	69.8%	2.16
Dependent Elderly	45.8%	2.15	44.6%	1.90
Only Elderly	84.7%	2.17	85.2%	2.23

Source: Authors' calculation from VHLS 2002 & 2004

their urban counterparts. This situation could be explained by the fact that many rural elderly people were engaged in agriculture-based activities. By gender, the elderly females were less economically active than their male peers. In addition, married and non-married people were more active than widows. Higher employment rates were also found among the elderly in households with an elderly head or with only elderly members. In dependent elderly households, less than 20 percent of the elderly worked. This evidence might imply that elderly who faced the most trouble working (either health problems or disability) were able to rely on their children for help. By age, the elderly aged from 60 to 64 maintained an over 60 percent employment rate, and this percentage gradually decreased with increasing age. In summary, lower employment rates could be found among urban dwellers, widows, women, those over age 70, and elderly who lived as dependents in households.

Table 6 shows the data on housework among the Vietnamese elderly. Generally, the same trends found for working status also apply to housework, but the extent of the differences tends to be smaller. The exception is that women did much more housework than men.

#### **4.4. Housing conditions of elderly households**

The surveys contain many indicators that can be used to evaluate the housing conditions of the elderly households. We use the following indicators: (1) housing structures, (2) sources of drinking and cooking water, (3) toilet usage, and (4) sources of lighting. Table 7 presents data on the housing conditions of the elderly households through four surveys. We can observe that there were improvements in all areas, most notably in the widespread adoption of electric lighting for homes.

Housing structures have improved over time. The percentage of temporary houses decreased from 29.25 percent in 1992/93 to 18.83 percent in 2004, while the percentage of houses with bathroom, kitchen, and toilet (BKT) increased in the same period, particularly for the houses with shared bathroom, kitchen, and toilet (from 1.91 percent to 10.51 percent).

Over the decade, the elderly households had more chances to access better water sources for drinking and cooking, which in turn might be good for their health. Percentage of the elderly households using an individual tap