

## **Social Stratification in Vietnam (*Survey through Several Provinces and Cities*)**

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**Abstract:** *Based on survey 1121 people in five provinces in Vietnam, the article analyzes the current situation of social stratification through the economic indicators of living standards, housing conditions and family living facilities. That Research shows that 76% of the average living standard, and 15.8% of affluent living standards. Compared with five years ago, the standard of living of the majority of survey participants increased. While 61.5% of people said that their living standards rise less and 27.4% of people said that life does change; only 4% said their lives diminished. Survey shows that 81.8% of participants with private ownership for existing homes are in, while only 6.2% of those currently renting a house for shelter. Regarding household facilities, 88.8% of families with "refrigerator", followed by "washing machines" (71.7%); "Air" (53.6), "Mobile" (34.2%); "Tablet" (13.5%) and "cameras, camcorders" (23.4%). Despite the uneven income and the gap in living standards between regions and between peoples, but Vietnam has income distribution in the population at a relatively equal; whether increases are likely moderate levels of inequality.*

**Keywords:** *social stratification; the gap between rich and poor, middle class.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Social stratification is a common phenomenon in the development of human society. The world has had many famous authors studied of social stratification as K. Mark (1818-1883); Max Weber (1864-1920); V. Pareto (1848-1923); J. Schumpeter (1883-1950); etc. Besides, many empirical studies on social stratification with different dimensions, at different times, in different countries.

With developing countries like Vietnam, social stratification going on quite well in the context of Vietnam society is shifting from centralized economy to a market economy. Therefore, the study of social stratification in Vietnam not only make more clear of social structures change, stratification and the gap between rich and poor but also the proof that the relevance, correctness of the policies and programs of economic development of a country.

This article mainly based on survey data of project "Research to apply social stratification theory in order to implement social justice in Vietnam today" (supported by National Foundation for Science and Technology Development; Code: 13-3-2012.12). Besides, the article also refer to national data on Living Standards survey is done in recent years.

The project selected 5 provinces represent the country to the survey. With random sampling method each province survey 1 district/town, from which select 1 communes/wards. This study was conducted in March and April, 2015.

Each province surveyed 200 questionnaires, including residents and staff, management leadership. The total number of valid was 1121 questionnaires, which, Hanoi is the province with the largest number with 264 (23.6%), followed by Da Nang with 242 (21.6%); Phu Tho with 213 (19%), Binh Phuoc 204 (18.2%), Can Tho is lowest with 198 (17.7%).

*Age:* the average age of participants was 49.1 years old. In it, Danang is the province with the age of the highest, average age 54.4; followed by Hanoi with an average of 54 years old; Binh Phuoc is lowest with an average age of participants in the survey was 41.5. At this age the reviews answer all have their own views and demonstrate responsibility and a attitude to the problems of their local.

*Gender:* male participation rate in the survey more than women rate with 57% respectively compared to 43%. In particular, Can Tho is the biggest difference; the proportion of men participating in the survey is much higher than women, respectively 71.2% versus 28.8%. Phu Tho Province alone with female participation rate than men with 55.9% rate compared with 44.1%. Also, there are differences with statistical significance of participation of men and women, between different provinces with  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table1.** *Sample Structure by sex in province*

Province/city	Men		Women		Total		P
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Da Nang	145	59.9	97	40.1	242	100	0,000
Binh Phuoc	112	55.7	89	44.3	201	100	
Ha Noi	145	54.9	119	45.1	264	100	
Phu Tho	93	44.1	118	55.9	211	100	
Can Tho	141	71.2	57	28.8	198	100	
Total	636	57.0	480	43.0	1116	100	

**Source:** *Data project, Code: 13-3-2012.12*

*Educational background:* More than 90% of the participants had high school degree or above. In which those with qualifications from Colleges/Universities highest percentage with 41.2%; especially those with low primary education with 1.6%. Furthermore, around 6% of participants have postgraduate qualifications. This shows the quality of the survey information is ensured, the ability to recognize the problem of the participants also raised.

In the provinces, the proportion of respondents with college degrees/University offers the largest proportion in which Hanoi has the highest rate with 50.8%; the lowest was 27.5% Can Tho.

Can Tho province is also the percentage of people with the highest level of primary school with 5.2%; simultaneously at the different levels of education are also similarities in the proportion of participants.

**Table2.** *Education levels by province*

	Da Nang		Binh Phuoc		Ha Noi		Phu Tho		Can Tho		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Primary School	1	0.4	2	2.0	2	0.8	1	0.5	10	5.2	18	1.6
Secondary School	28	11.6	18	9.1	51	19.5	38	18.1	48	24.9	183	16.6
High School	72	29.8	48	24.2	34	13	57	27.1	45	23.3	256	12.7
Secondary	29	12.0	34	17.2	21	8.0	25	11.9	18	9.3	127	11.5
College /University	100	41.3	88	44.4	133	50.8	81	38.6	53	27.5	455	41.2
Postgraduate	12	5.0	6	3.0	21	8.0	8	3.8	19	9.8	66	6.0
Total	242	100	198	100	262	100	210	100	193	100	1105	100

( $P=0,000$ )

**Source:** *Data project, Code: 13-3-2012.12*

*Marital status:* survey results show that mainly people who are married with 84.6%; followed by those who do not have a wife/husband with 10.2%; the divorce rate, the separation of people polled very low. This shows that, the stability of life and ideological comfort of people polled are also decisive factors to the reliability of the information. At the same time, survey participants have diverse circumstances of marital status helps information multidimensional recognized.

In the provinces of Da Nang, Hanoi is the percentage of participants with wife/husband largest, 91.7% respectively and 87.5%. Also in this both provinces ratio who do not have husbands/ wives less than other provinces; widowed high rate with 3.3% and 6.1% in Danang and Hanoi. While divorce rates, separations in both cities is low. In Binh Phuoc, Phu Tho and Can Tho provinces where the proportion of people without wife/husband large. In Binh Phuoc that have the highest percentage with 26.1%, followed by 11.9% in Phu Tho and Can Tho is 8.2%. Proportion widowed quite low, peaking with 3.6% Tho. Divorce is very low rate.

**Table3.** Marital status by province/city

	Da Nang		Binh Phuoc		Ha Noi		Phu Tho		Can Tho		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	220	91.7	141	70.9	230	87.5	175	83.3	170	87.6	93	84.6
Never married	10	4.2	52	26.1	10	3.8	25	11.9	16	8.2	113	10.2
Widowed	8	3.3	2	1.0	16	6.1	8	3.8	7	3.6	41	3.7
Divorced	2	0.8	4	2.0	7	2.7	1	0.5	1	0.5	15	1.4
Separated	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	0	0	1	0.1
Total	240	100	199	100	263	100	210	100	194	100	1106	100

(P=0,000)

**Source:** Data project, Code: 13-3-2012.12

*Occupation:* occupation of the survey participants are diverse, including those who are in leadership, management engaged with the highest rate with 22.6%, followed by the unskilled labor with 17.6%, staff office assistant with 9.8%. The remaining small percentage of those who work in the various areas of expertise.

Economic sector of the survey participants are diverse. In which those working in state economic sectors and individuals the highest proportion, 47.3% and 24.6% respectively. The proportion of people working in the area of foreign investment is very low, only 0.4%. In addition, the private sector also has the proportion of participants with 10%.

There are differences among the provinces on the economic sector of the survey participants are working in it, in the state sector, Da Nang and Binh Phuoc provinces where the proportion is people working in the state sector highest rate with 56% and 67.4% respectively; while in other provinces the ratio is lower. While Phu Tho and Can Tho proportion of respondents working in the field of private economic high, 34.1% and 41.6 respectively, the provincial Hanoi, Da Nang and Binh Phuoc have lower rates lot.

## 2. THE SITUATION OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

### 2.1. The Gap between Rich and Poor

Survey results of the research showed that local people live their rank different levels. Among them, mainly those with average income with 76.1%, followed by those with wealthier income with 15.8%, the lowest proportion of very poor people living with 0, 1%.

Compared with five years ago, the standard of living of the majority of survey participants increased. While 61.5% of people said that their living standards raise less and 27.4% of people said that life does change; only a very small proportion of people believe that their lives reduced to 4%. This shows that the living standards of people tend to increase; besides there is also a certain percentage of participants felt no change in living standards over the past 5 years.

Vietnam Living Standards Survey data recent years shows that the living standards of the population strata in both urban and rural regions across the country continue to improve. Per capita income per month across the country by the current price tends to increase over the years.

Per capita income increased relatively well over the years, it represents the standard of living is raised, the life of all strata of the population in the region, especially the poorer strata has been improved and the proportion of households poor in urban and rural areas, the region fell. Overall poverty rate has dropped rapidly in 1993 was 58.1% dropped to 37.4% in 1998 (GSO, 2000: 263) and the national poverty rate in 2012 decreased 11.1% are spot under poor standards issued by the Government for 2011-2015 (2011 was 12.6%, in 2010 14.2%), 4.3% in urban and rural areas is 14.1% (GSO, 2014: 20). Poverty rate in urban areas, rural areas and regions have decreased compared to previous years.

According to the results of Vietnam Living Standards survey from 1993, the gap in per capita income/month between the lowest income group and the highest income groups tend to increasing: 1993 was 4.1 times and 9.4 times in 2012 (see Table 4).

**Table4.** Per capita income/monthly by income quintile (Unit: 1,000 VND)

Year	1993	1999	2004	2008	2012
Quintile 1 (poorest)	41,1	97,0	141,8	275,0	511,6
Quintile 2	57,8	181,4	240,7	477,2	984,1
Quintile 3	79,6	254,0	347,0	699,9	1.499,6
Quintile 4	99,2	346,7	514,2	1.067,4	2.222,5
Quintile 5 (richest)	182,5	741,6	1182,3	2.458,2	4.784,5
Income gap	<b>4,4</b>	<b>7,6</b>	<b>8,3</b>	<b>8,9</b>	<b>9,4</b>

**Source:** Vietnam Living Standard Survey, 1993, 1998, 2004, 2008 and 2012

If according the standard "40%" of the World Bank to assess the income distribution of the population in Vietnam tends to increase inequalities. This standard income ratio at 40% of the population with the lowest income in the total income of the entire population. If this proportion is less than 12%, there is high inequality of income, in the range 12-17%, there is inequality medium; and greater than 17%, there is relatively equal. This proportion in Vietnam based on the number of households in 1994 was 20%, 17.4% in 2004 and 2012 was 14.9% (GSO, 2014: 21). Under this standard, the present Vietnam has income distribution in the population at a relatively equal but tend to increase inequality medium. Thus, the disparity in income is going to be quite common in Vietnam, but also to the extent possible, not become a conflict of interests.

In 2012, per capita income of the population have increased significantly compared with the previous year. But the low-income group increased very slowly compared with the group with good incomes and wealth. Therefore, the income gap between the populations tend to rise and there is still wide disparities between urban and rural areas, between the rich and poor groups, between regions (Table 5).

**Table5.** Income per capita/month by sector and region (Unit: 1,000 VND)

Year	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
Whole country	356.1	484.4	636.5	995.2	1,387.1	1,999.8
Urban	622.1	815.4	1,058.4	1,605.2	2,129.5	2,989.1
Rural	275.1	378.1	505.7	762.2	1,070.4	1,579.4
Red River delta	353.1	488.2	653.3	1,048.5	1,567.8	2,337.1
North East	268.8	379.9	511.2	768.0	1,054.8	1,482.1
North West	197.0	265.7	372.5	549.6	740.9	998.8
North Central Coast	235.4	317.1	418.3	641.1	902.8	1,344.8
South Central Coast	305.8	414.9	550.7	843.3	1,162.1	1,698.4
Central Highland	244.0	390.2	522.4	794.6	1,087.9	1,643.3
South East	619.7	833.0	1,064.7	1,649.2	2,165.0	3,016.4
Mekong River delta	371.3	471.1	627.6	939.9	1,247.2	1,796.7

**Source:** Vietnam Living Standard Survey, 2012

Table 5 shows that the average income distribution is uneven between regions and the gap in living standards between regions tend to increase over the years. The difference in income between the population groups showed the impact of natural conditions, economic, cultural and social to social stratification, between rich and poor. One thing to note is, the data per capita income by GSO performed were adjusted price differences between regions and between urban and rural areas, so that this difference reflects the social stratification of fact. As identified in the congress document Eleventh National Party "The life of a part of the population, especially in mountain, remote and isolated many difficulties. Alleviation of poverty is not sustainable, high poverty relapse. Distance wealth gap is relatively large and ever more bigger "(VCP, 2011). Not only stratification of social classes, but within the Vietnam party communist also have the breadth rich - poor, as stated by General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong "Now the party has the gap between the rich - poor, with the rich very quickly, life away from the workers "(Nguyen Phu Trong, 2012)

Survey of project shows, the gap in the last 5 years, the people said, the wealth gap in the overall population increase of 51.6%; and 33.0% for the reduction; no change as 15.4%. In general, between rich and poor tend to increase (up 51.6%).Those with affluent and wealthy economy recently is? The answer may in Table 6.

**Table6.** The rich, successful last time

Social group	Many		Few		None		Difficult to asses		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
University or higher education	425	37,9	421	37,6	40	3,6	196	17,5	39	3,5
Higher qualifications	445	39,7	416	37,1	68	6,1	156	13,9	36	3,2
Dynamic, resourceful	555	49,5	390	30,3	53	4,7	134	12,0	39	3,5
Hardworking, diligent	467	41,7	413	36,8	62	5,5	142	12,7	37	3,3
Leadership positions, top management	430	38,4	351	31,3	93	8,3	211	18,8	36	3,2
Those who have parents, wives and children in high office	232	20,7	344	30,7	207	18,5	298	26,6	40	3,6
Those who have lucky	113	10,1	530	47,3	179	16,0	259	23,1	40	3,6
Those who do illegal business, smuggling, tax evasion	102	9,1	195	17,4	357	31,8	426	38,0	40	3,6
People who run positions, bribery	127	11,3	165	14,7	283	25,2	506	45,1	40	3,6
Those Corruption	162	14,5	169	15,1	264	23,6	486	43,4	40	3,6
Those skilled production, business	563	50,2	335	29,9	70	6,2	113	10,1	40	3,6
Those with extensive social relations	253	22,6	452	40,3	120	10,7	256	22,8	40	3,6
People who work in offices hold, hold economic resources	275	24,5	322	28,7	121	10,8	362	32,3	41	3,7
Other	80	7,1	385	34,3	136	12,1	428	38,2		

Source: Data project, Code: 13-3-2012.12

Table 6 shows, the rich are those who are good at manufacturing and trading (many is 50.2% ); the dynamic, resourceful (a many of 49.5%) and the hard working (as few 41.7%).

According percentage assessed as many, in order from highest to lowest are as follows: 1) Those who are good production and business (50.2%); 2) The dynamic, resourceful (49.5%); 3) Those hardworking, diligent (41.7%); 4) People with higher qualifications (39.7); 5) Those who have leadership positions, top management (38.4); 6) Those who have a university or higher education (37.9%); 7) People who work in offices hold, hold economic resources (24.5%); 8) Those who have extensive social relations (22.6%); 9) People who have parents, wives and children in high office (20.7%); 10) Those of corruption (14.5% 0, 11) Those who run positions, bribery (11.3%); 12) Those lucky (10.1%); 13) Those who do illegal business, smuggling, tax evasion (9.1%); 14) Others (7.1%)

According to the assessment the level of both levels (many and few), in order from highest to lowest are as follows: 1) Those who are good at manufacturing and trading (80.1%); 2) The dynamic, resourceful (79.8%); 3) Those hardworking, diligent, hard-working (78.5%); 4) People with higher qualifications (76.8%); 5) Those who have a university or higher education (75.5%); 6) Those who have leadership positions, top management (69.7%); 7) Those who have extensive social relations (62.9%); 8) Those lucky (53.4%); 9) People who work in offices hold, hold economic resources (53.2%); 10) People who have parents, wives and children in high office (51.4%); 11) Others (41.4%); 12) Those of corruption (29.6%); 13) Those who do illegal business, smuggling, tax evasion (26.5%); 14) Those who run civil rights (26.0%).

Besides the positive reviews it, a remarkable thing that the judgment of the people, it also has a rich part due to corruption (29.6%); the illegal business, smuggling, tax evasion (26.5%); and those bribery, cash for officials (26.0%). This result reflects quite right downside of the development process in Vietnam, on the phenomenon of corruption, which is seen as a "national disaster". As the delegates congress document Eleventh National Party said, "The prevention and control of corruption, waste not meet the requirements set out. Bureaucracy, corruption, wastefulness remain serious, with the Sophisticated expression, complex, not prevent, repel, causing annoyance society " (VCP, 2011).

In a speech at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong said that "public opinion the most attention, the most pressing is corruption, factionalism, local, group benefits ... in a majority of members in positions of power, even in some high-ranking officials of the Party, the State, in office or resigned "(Nguyen Phu Trong, 2012).

The evaluation report of the organization Transparency International ranked Vietnam as one of the lowest ranked countries in terms of transparency and corruption index. December 3, 2014,

Transparency International (TI) announced the Corruption Perceptions Index 2014 (CPI 2014), ranking 175 countries and territories based on the comments of entrepreneurs and professionals National on corruption in the public sector in each country/territory. This year, Vietnam achieved 31/100 points, ranking 119th on the global rankings and 18th out of 28 countries and territories were assessed in the Asia - Pacific. One thing worth noting is Vietnam's CPI score has not changed in three consecutive years (2012- 2014) and corruption in the public sector remains a serious problem in the country. (CPI 2014; www.transparency.org)

## 2.2. Social Stratification of Housing

In the market economy, current housing is another one of the important criteria of social stratification in general, living standards in particular.

**Table7.** Houses in the provinces.

House	Da Nang		Binh Phuoc		Ha Noi		Phu Tho		Can Tho		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1-storey private house	86	36.1	58	29.1	60	23	84	40	43	23.1	331	30.3
2 storey private house	95	39.9	4	2	148	56.7	83	39.5	10	5.4	340	31.1
Old apartment	16	6.7	0	0	30	11.5	3	1.4	3	1.6	52	4.8
New apartment	12	5.0	1	0.5	3	1.1	0	0	3	1.6	19	1.7
Other	29	12.2	136	68.3	20	7.7	40	19.1	127	68.3	352	32.2
Total	238	100	199	100	261	100	210	100	186	100	1094	100

( $P < 0,005$ )

**Source:** Data project, Code: 13-3-2012.12

Table 7 shows, the housing of the people in the survey area are diverse. Which kinds of common people is housing property 1 floor (30.3%); 2 storey house (31.1%) and the semi-permanent/ simple house (32%); lowest is new is apartment only 1.7% of people currently own. Thereby see, now people still want to be in a private home; quality of the houses is increasingly high.

Ownership housing is a major problem for households. Survey shows that 81.8% proportion of participants with private ownership for existing homes are in, while only 6.2% of those currently renting a house for shelter. This shows that now people are getting towards home ownership for ourselves. Between provinces have differences in home ownership, which, Can Tho province have participants rate of house ownership with 89.4% in the highest and lowest in Binh Phuoc to 69, 9%.

Among the provinces have differences in ownership for housing. In particular, for the houseowner 2 storey or more, Hanoi is a city with the highest percentage with 56.7%; Danang also rate 39.9%; Binh Phuoc lowest rate with only 2% of people owning a second or higher floors. A new study points out, between the Northern provinces the proportion of people owning houses two stories or more than the southern provinces.

## 2.3. Social Stratification of the Means of Subsistence in Family

**Table8.** Means living in families by province/city

Means living in families	Da Nang		Binh Phuoc		Ha Noi		Phu Tho		Can Tho		Total		P
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Personal computer	119	49,2	89	44,7	113	43,3	74	35,2	60	31,6	455	41,3	0,000
Mobile phone	85	35,1	74	37,2	86	33	70	33,3	63	33,2	378	34,2	0,875
Tablet	59	24,4	11	5,5	41	15,7	19	9,0	19	10	149	13,5	0,000
Cameras, camcorders	95	39,3	31	15,6	78	29,9	34	16,2	20	10,5	258	23,4	0,44
Car	20	8,3	13	6,5	18	6,9	17	8,1	30	15,8	98	8,9	0,19
Refrigerator	227	93,8	159	79,9	240	92	199	94,8	154	81,1	979	88,8	0,000
Air conditioner	150	62	64	32,2	193	73,9	119	56,7	65	34,2	591	53,6	0,000
Washing machine	210	86,8	120	60,3	204	78,2	152	72,4	104	54,7	790	71,7	0,000
Other	15	6,7	5	2,5	14	5,4	17	8,1	9	4,7	60	5,5	0,259

**Source:** Data project, Code: 13-3-2012.12

Research shows that the living standards of people in the survey area are progressive steps, means the family living in the province quite adequate, especially the essential means for life. In which, "refrigerator" is the tool with many family owned most (88.8%), followed by the "washing machine"

(71.7%); "Air" (53.6). With figures showing people's lives have been improved a lot. Most people agree that the refrigerator, washing machine and air conditioning are now necessities of the family indispensable. Also, some utensils as "Mobile" (34.2%); "Tablet" (13.5%) and "cameras, camcorders" (23.4%) are people buying fewer numbers. Because they said, tablets, cameras, camcorders, for some people is necessary but with the majority of people, they see that they are not in high demand.

Between provinces have differences on the ownership of individual instruments and household appliances such as personal computers; tablet PC; refrigerator 'conditioning and washing machine. Specifically, the property "tablet" people in Danang highest proportion with 24.4%, followed by Hanoi with 15.7%; Binh Phuoc is lowest with 5.5%. Or in the possession of "personal computer" Danang proportion of people owning more than people in Can Tho, 49.2%, and 31.6% respectively. In essential items such as refrigerators rate Danang people still possesses the highest percentage with 93.8%, while this rate in Binh Phuoc residents reached 79.9% level. Also, in other items such as washing machines, air conditioning are also differences in the ownership of people between provinces.

### **3. DISCUSS**

Social stratification, the gap between rich and poor are common social phenomenon, on the one hand as a consequence of the Doi Moi policy, on the other hand is the inevitable result of market economy, open policies and international integration three decades last century in Vietnam. The process of increasing household wealth, remove hunger and reduce poverty, as a result of the promulgation and implementation of policies, reflecting the effective and efficient policies to encourage legitimate wealth, legal, with actively alleviation, accelerated poverty reduction. At the same time, the efforts of the strata in economic development, constantly improve the standard of living for the family, society; achieve the objective of a prosperous people, a strong country.

Research shows that, during the Vietnam Innovation policy implementation and development of the market economy, the inevitable appearance affluent social groups who are good at manufacturing, business, forming a business class during industrialization. Those with education, professional qualifications will also be involved in the middle class and higher middle class. Currently in Vietnam, along with civil rights groups with high, businessmen and intellectuals will be the better-off social groups, success in society.

Besides the social progress with social stratification legitimate concern is the gap between rich and poor has increased over time. This increases the inequalities between population groups, between rich and poor. Moreover, corruption in Vietnam is a problem, that the issue of social control is weak; the implementation of the law is not strictly true. This is the underlying factor in the risk of instability society.

Need further research on social stratification, focusing on the formation of the middle class, business class and intellectuals to identify, rank and evaluate the role of social class in market economy, international integration. Also, analysis and criticism of social policy, to contribute to narrowing the wealth gap, reduce inequality and increase social equity. Must attach importance to close cooperation between economic growth and make progress and social justice; ensure social security, care and physical life and spirit of the people, especially the poor, the people in the remote, especially during difficult economic situation, declining; economic development associated with cultural development.

### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Currently in Vietnam, together with the group of high social status, the businessmen and intellectuals will be the better-off social groups, success in society. Besides the social progress with social stratification legitimate concern is the gap between rich and poor has increased over time, increased inequalities between population groups, between regions.

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