

DISCUSSION PAPER

Strengthening Civil Registration in Viet Nam: Evidence and Future Focus



Background and Purpose

This *Discussion Paper* aims to support technical and policy dialogue among CRVS stakeholders, development partners, and researchers. Drawing on a desk-based review of recent reports, it synthesizes evidence on potentially underrepresented population groups in Viet Nam's civil registration system.

The objectives are to:

- Highlight persisting gaps in birth and death registration coverage.
- Summarize key recommendations from national reports, including the Vital Statistics Report (2021–2024).
- Propose potential areas for further analysis and consideration in the development of the new National Programme of Actions on CRVS period 2026-2030.

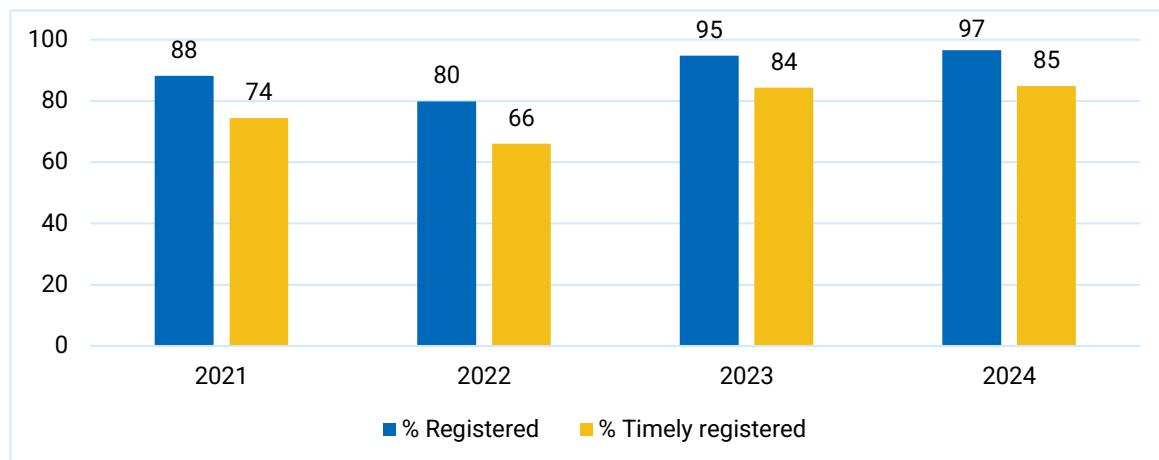
The findings and suggestions in this paper are intended to stimulate discussion with line ministries and partner agencies on how CRVS disparity issues can be addressed to inform the development of the new National Programme of Actions on CRVS period 2026-2030. Feedback from this consultative process will also help shape any future work that may be brought forward for consideration by relevant line ministries.

Approaching Universal Registration

Viet Nam has made substantial progress in improving birth and death registration completeness over recent years. Current national data show completeness nearing universality (Figure 1 and 2).

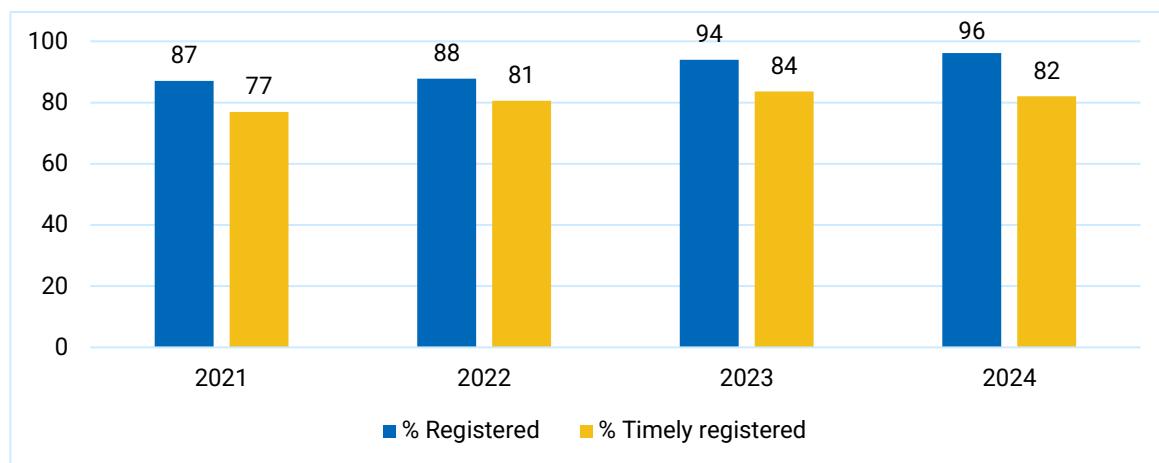
Birth registration completeness rose from 88.2% in 2021 to 96.6% in 2024. Meanwhile, death registration completeness increased from 87.1% to 96.2% over the same period. Improvements were also noted in registration timeliness and data system modernization.

Figure 1: Birth Registration and Timely Birth Registration Rates, 2021–2024
(% of total live births)



Source: Vital Statistics Report, 2021-2024.

Figure 2: Death Registration and Timely Death Registration Rates, 2021–2024
(% of total deaths)



Source: Vital Statistics Report, 2021-2024.

But disparities exist...

A closer look at disaggregated data and qualitative findings, however, reveals that some groups continue to face significant challenges in accessing civil registration services. These include:

- Ethnic minorities, particularly in remote and mountainous provinces (1).
- Undocumented migrants, stateless persons, and children of mixed-nationality parents (1,2).

Disparities in Birth Registration

The Vital Statistics Report (2021-2024) identifies:

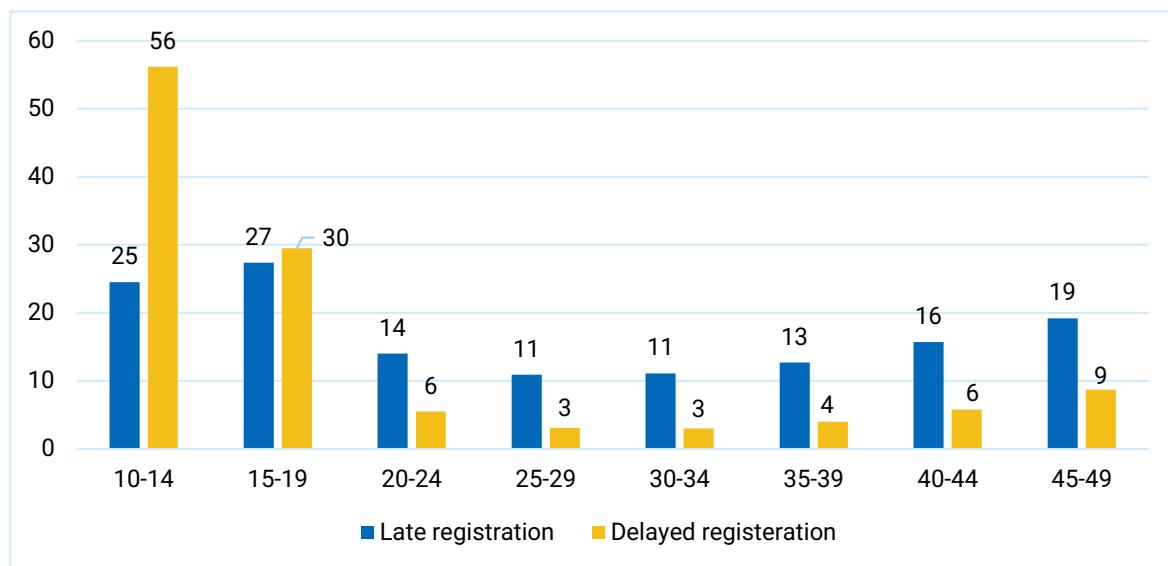
“Girls, children of young mothers, and ethnic minority children face the highest risk of late or delayed birth registration.”

More than half of children born to young mothers missed timely registration (Figure 3). Limited legal awareness and early childbirth outside the legal marriage age are key contributing factors (2).

Ethnicity is also linked to late and delayed registration (Figure 4).

- Among 54 ethnic groups, several recorded late registration rates exceeding 50%, notably Mong, Xtieng, and Lo Lo. These groups also feature among those with the highest delayed birth registration rates.
- Many of these ethnic groups reside in remote, mountainous areas with limited access to services. In some areas, practices like child and consanguineous marriage continue to influence early marriage and contribute to delays in birth registration (2).

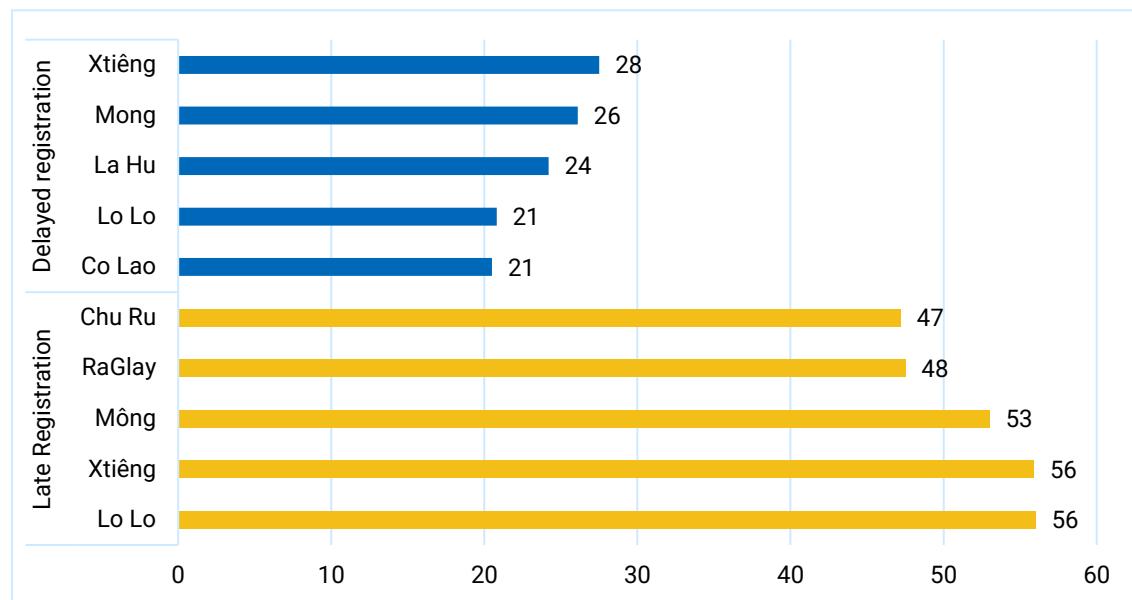
Figure 3: Late and Delayed Birth Registration by Maternal Age Group (2021–2024) (% of live births)



Note: High rates among ages 10–14 should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of births.

Source: Vital Statistics Report, 2021-2024.

Figure 4: Ethnic Minorities with the Highest Rates of Late and Delayed Birth Registration, 2021–2024



Source: Vital Statistics Report, 2021-2024.

What the Data is Telling Us:

Available data suggests that disparities in timeliness of birth registration are more pronounced than in overall registration rates. A more focused analysis could help identify the underlying factors, including service access barriers and potential structural disadvantages.

Early childbearing linked to child marriage also appears to be a critical driver of delayed or late registration, particularly among certain ethnic groups where early or informal unions remain more common.

Future assessments may further benefit from examining intersectional factors – such as how age, marital status, ethnicity, and geography combine to affect timely registration.

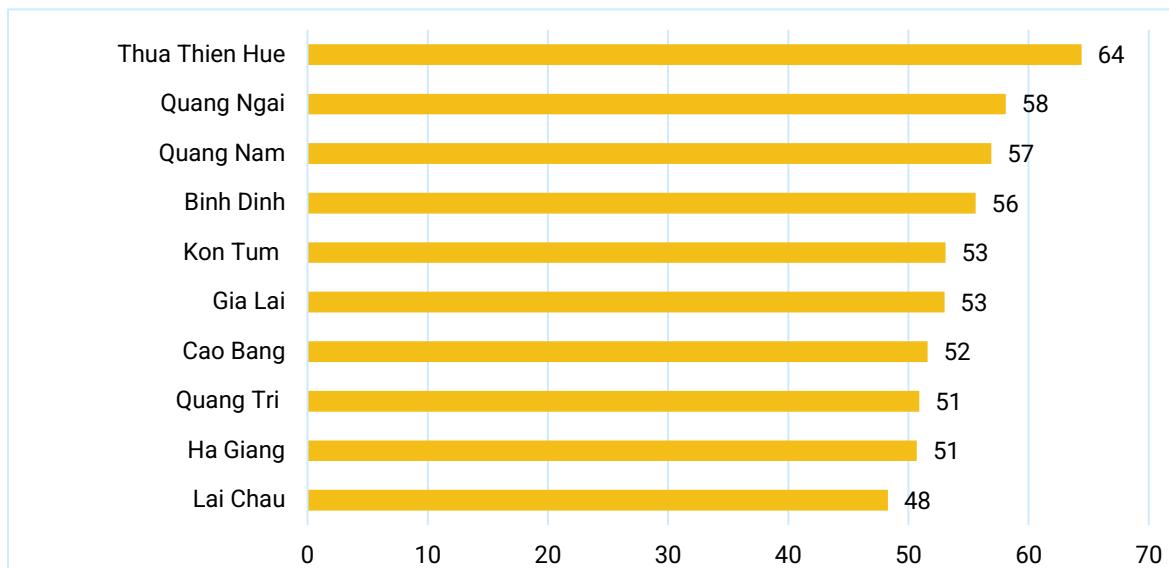
Disparities in Death Registration

The Vital Statistics Report (2021-2024) also reveals:

"One in three deaths registered is still late or delayed."

Across the country, 10 provinces recorded the highest combined shares of late and delayed death registrations, all exceeding 50% (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Provinces with the Highest Untimely Death Registration, 2021-2024



Source: Vital Statistics Report, 2021-2024

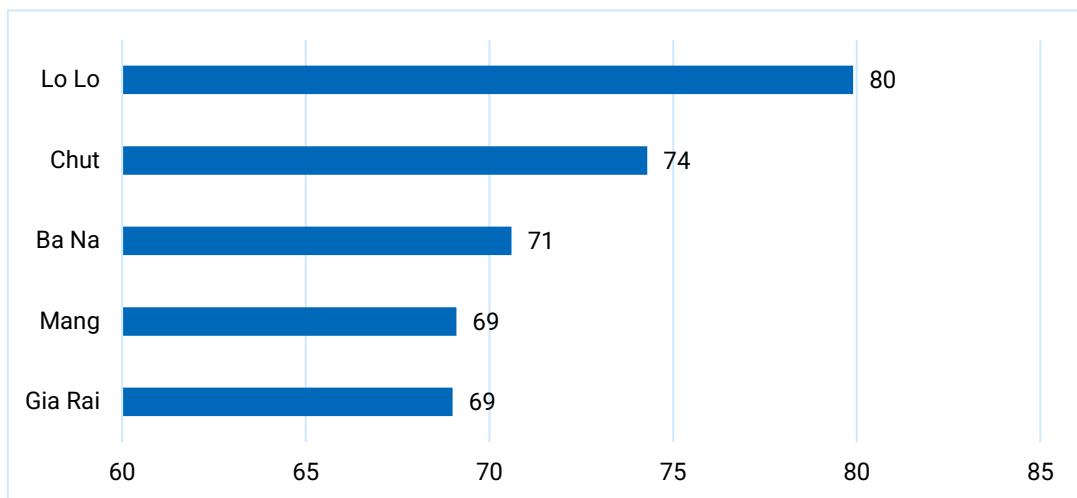
Thua Thien Hue tops the list at 64.4%, with a significant share of registrations delayed by more than one year.

"1 in every 2 registered deaths in Thua Thien Hue was delayed for at least a year."

As with birth registration, ethnicity is found to be associated with late and delayed registration. Top five ethnic groups with late registration include Lo Lo, Chut, Ba Na, Mung, and Gai Rai (Figure 6).

Special attention should be given to Lo Lo, where the high prevalence of late and delayed registration is evident in both births and deaths.

Figure 6: Ethnic Minorities with the Highest Rates of Late and Delayed Death Registration, 2021–2024

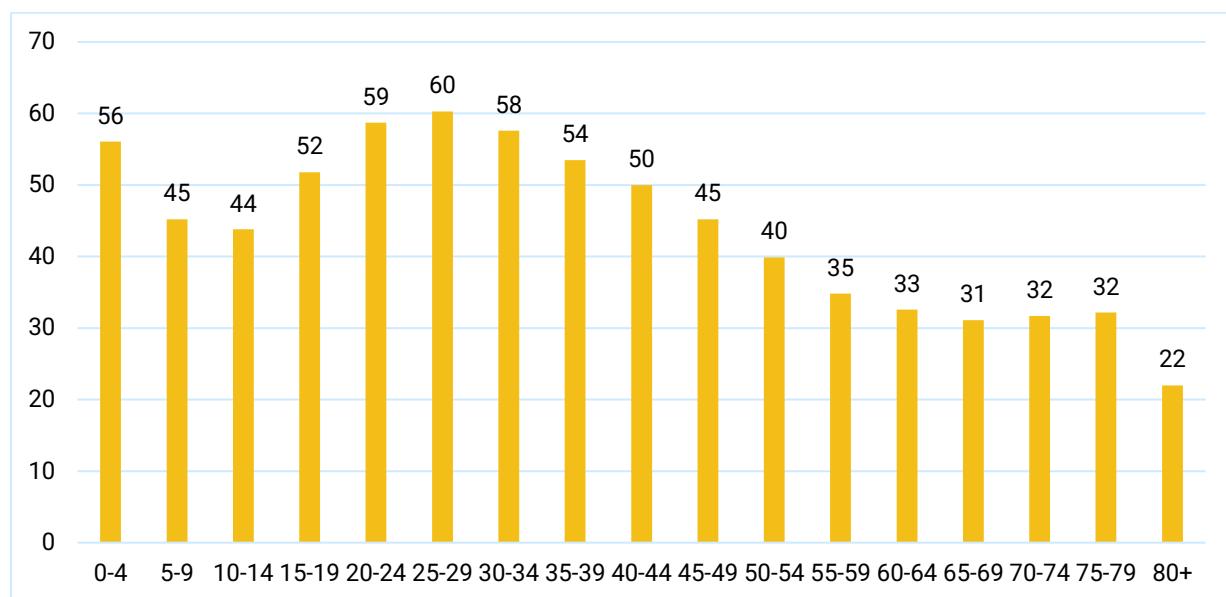


Source: Vital Statistics Report, 2021-2024

Late death registration is more common among young people than older groups – contrary to our common assumption. As Figure 5 shows, among children under 5:

“Only 4 in 10 deaths are registered on time and half of the rest are delayed by over a year.”

Figure 7: Distribution of Untimely Death Registration by Age Group, 2021–2024



Source: Vital Statistics Report, 2021-2024

What the Data is Telling Us:

1 in 3 deaths registered is still late or delayed—particularly for young children, certain ethnic groups, and specific provinces.

While current data points to ethnic and geographic disparities and age-related delays, further analysis is needed to better understand the underlying causes by:

- Disaggregating late and delayed registrations by place of death (e.g., home vs. facility) and by intersectionality of ethnicity, province, and age.
- Exploring overlaps with birth registration delays to identify communities facing persistent civil registration challenges.
- Conducting subgroup analysis to better understand challenges among ethnic minorities and other vulnerable populations.

Key Barriers to Registration

Service Provision, Awareness and Accessibility (1-2, 4)

- Low awareness of registration requirements among marginalized populations.
- Geographic isolation, especially in ethnic minority communities.
- Language and cultural differences, which hinder communication with registrars.
- Administrative burden, including lack of local capacity, unclear procedures, and inconsistent implementation.
- Discrimination or misunderstandings by service providers.

Legal and Policy Barriers (2)

- Civil registration is generally available only to individuals with recognized legal status.
- Existing laws may not sufficiently support the registration of marginalized or undocumented groups.
- Legal protection for citizens during migration processes requires attention, reducing the risk of exclusion from civil registration.
- Women migrants often face specific risks and limited legal recognition for their registration needs.
- Limited international cooperation disrupts identity continuity and hinders safe migration.

Capacity and system gaps (2)

- Cause-of-death data lacks quality and standardization, especially for deaths outside health facilities. Entries are uncertified, incomplete, or non-coded, making them incompatible with WHO's ICD classification.
- Neonatal and infant deaths are often underreported by existing procedures and incomplete integration between birth and death registration systems.

- Registration forms and data content are insufficient, often missing key demographic and health variables, limiting the utilization of CRVS data.
- System linkages and updates are weak, with inconsistent coding and poor synchronization between CRVS, health, and population data systems.
- Manual and delayed data processes between key government agencies hinder timely reporting and real-time monitoring, leading to inefficiencies and data gaps.

Opportunities and Way Forwards

- Leverage rich datasets available to deepen analysis of timeliness, completeness, and inequality—with a focus on intersectionality across ethnicity, age, geography, sex, and other overlapping factors such as early marriage that contribute to exclusion. In other countries, this has been used to identify focus areas for advocacy campaigns and additional support to registration offices as well as business process and legal changes.
- Qualitative research guided by quantitative analysis to understand the root causes to further understand the barriers to registration. In other countries, this has been used to streamline business processes and making them more inclusive. It has also supported awareness campaigns and outreach to officials and communities to support higher rates of registration.
- Improve data quality and interoperability by enhancing system linkages between CRVS, health, and population databases, and adopting standardized coding and data exchange protocols. This approach is increasingly being applied across the region.
- Target persistent registration delays by streamlining procedures, raising awareness, and reducing administrative burdens—particularly in provinces and among populations with high untimely registration rates.
- Advance legal and policy reform to close gaps affecting stateless persons, undocumented migrants, and other marginalized groups. These groups often face additional and sometimes impossible documentation requirements. These can be addressed and simplified to support registration.

- Strengthen cross-sector collaboration between justice, health, statistics, and local authorities to ensure coordinated, inclusive CRVS improvements.

Possible Datasets for Further Analysis

1. National Civil Registration Database
2. 2024 Intercensal Population and Housing Survey
3. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
4. 2024 Socio-Economic Survey of 53 Ethnic Minority Groups
5. MoH's Health Management Information System
6. Population and Family Planning (PFP) Database, Ministry of Health

Source of Information

This brief draws on insights synthesized from the following sources.

1. [Synthesis of the Bali Process Civil Registration Assessment Toolkit: Pilot Projects in Pakistan, Thailand, and Viet Nam \(2022\)](#): Regional overview of civil registration barriers and strategies based on Bali Process Assessment Toolkit.
2. [Vital Statistics Report \(2021–2024\)](#): Government report analyzing trends in birth and death registration.
3. [ESCAP's Left No One Behind Platform](#): Equity-focused analysis using MICS data and Classification and Regression Trees (CART)
4. [Changes and Inequalities in Early Birth Registration and Childhood Care in Vietnam](#): Research based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, 2006 and 2011.
5. For detailed inequality reports from other countries, see the ESCAP regional platform on inequality assessment: <https://crvs.unescap.org/regional-picture/implementation-steps/inequality-assessment>

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Statistics Divisions

Where to find more about CRVS Inequality Assessments:



[https://www.unescap.org/projects/
inequality-assessments](https://www.unescap.org/projects/inequality-assessments)

For more resources, visit: getinthepicture.org