

# Migration and Employment in Ho Chi Minh City

*Females predominate among migrants to Ho Chi Minh City. Generally migrants are better educated and earn more than non-migrants, have similar unemployment rates and are more likely to be employed in the formal sector*

By Truong Si Anh, Patrick Gubry, \*  
Vu Thi Hong and Jerrold W. Huguét

Ho Chi Minh City is the largest city in Viet Nam, with a population estimated to be 4.7 million in 1994. The annual population growth rate of 3.5 per cent for the metropolitan area is also one of the highest in the country. Ho Chi Minh City is the main economic centre of southern Viet Nam. The economy is based largely on light manufacturing, construction,

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\* The authors of this article are Truong Si Anh, Head, Information and Population Studies Section, Institute for Economic Research of Ho Chi Minh City; Patrick Gubry, Researcher from ORSTOM, Centre Français sur la Population et le Développement (CEPED), Paris; Vu Thi Hong, Urban Planner, Urban Research Section, Institute for Economic Research of Ho Chi Minh City; and Jerrold W. Huguét, Population Affairs Officer, Population Division, ESCAP. This study was funded through UNFPA project VIE/93/P02, with financial and technical support from CEPED.

trade and sales, and government services. It had attracted three-fourths of the foreign investment approved up to February 1993 (United Nations, 1995).

Population growth in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) has been spurred by economic growth. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of the city was estimated to equal US\$ 810 in 1994, after increasing by an average of 7.8 per cent per annum over the previous three years. Per capita GDP in the city is about triple the national average.

All sectors of the economy attract migrants, and the occupational distribution of migrants does not differ much from that of non-migrants. Migration is an important component of population growth in Ho Chi Minh City and other large cities in Viet Nam and the volume of migration is believed to be increasing. Nonetheless, little research has been carried out on migration to urban areas.

### Study design

The Institute for Economic Research (IER) of Ho Chi Minh City conducted a survey of migrants in September 1994 in order to learn more about the migrants and their economic role in the city.<sup>1</sup>

Ho Chi Minh City comprises twelve inner and six peripheral districts, which are divided into a total of 282 sub-districts. The 18 districts could be considered as corresponding to the metropolitan area, with some agricultural land being included in the peripheral districts. For the migration survey conducted by IER, one peripheral district thought to contain few migrants was excluded, then two sub-districts were selected at random from each of the other 17 districts. From each of the resulting 34 sub-districts, one residence block was randomly selected. A residence block consists of 400 to 600 households.

The sample frame was prepared by the local authorities, who compiled a list of all 19,109 households in the 34 selected residence blocks. The household listing contained basic information about all household members, including their duration of residence in the city. Households were defined to be migrant households if they contained at least one person who had migrated to the city in the past 10 years, or after 1 April 1984 (the date used to define migrants in the 1989 population census). All other households were considered to be non-migrant households.

One thousand households were randomly selected to be administered the detailed questionnaire – 800 migrant households, and 200 non-migrant

households. The questionnaire was based on one designed for migration surveys by ESCAP (1980); it was modified with technical assistance from the Centre Français sur la Population et le Développement (CEPED). The first section of the questionnaire obtained basic demographic and socio-economic data from all household members. There were 5,807 persons in the 1,000 households.

The detailed individual questionnaire was administered to one migrant randomly selected among the migrants in each of the 800 migrant households, and to one person randomly selected from each of the 200 non-migrant households. Inspection of the completed questionnaires revealed that the local authorities had not applied the definition of a migrant correctly for 96 of the individual respondents. Of those, 89 had moved only within the city and 7 had moved in before 1 April 1984. Consequently, of the 1,000 individual respondents, only 704 were defined to be migrants and 296 were non-migrants, as illustrated in table 1.

For purposes of analysis, the 704 migrants were divided into two categories: (a) 362 who had migrated to the city between 1 April 1984 and 31 December 1989, and (b) 342 who had migrated between 1 January 1990 and the time of the survey, September 1994. As the two periods are not of equal length, in order to compare them, the number of migrants per month was calculated. For the earlier period, there were 5.2 individual respondents per month, and for the latter period, 6.0.

If the volume of migration to Ho Chi Minh City had been increasing rapidly, one would have expected an even greater number of migrants in the latter period. As households were the sample units, migrants not living in households were not included in the sample frame. These could be migrants living at construction sites, at other places of employment, in group quarters etc. In addition, some persons living in the sample households but who were

**Table 1: Number of individual respondents, by expected and actual migration status**

Expected status	Actual status		Total
	Migrant	Non-migrant	
Migrant	704	96	800
Non-migrant	0	200	200
Total	704	296	1,000

Source: Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

not considered to be household members, such as temporary visitors or persons who did not have a residence permit, may have been omitted from the survey. Thus, the survey methodology was likely to incorporate a disproportionate share of settled or established migrants and to omit more recent or temporary migrants.

Nearly all respondents were registered in some way in the city. Of the 342 migrants who arrived after 1989, 22 per cent had permanent residence permits, 63 per cent had temporary residence permits, 15 per cent did not have residence permits but had been registered by the local authorities, and one person had not registered in any way. This distribution no doubt reflects the sample design, which was biased towards usual members of households.

### Population growth and migration in Ho Chi Minh City

The average annual growth rate of Ho Chi Minh City between the 1979 and 1989 censuses equalled 1.87 per cent. Between 1989 and 1994, however, the annual average was 3.5 per cent. During that time, the rate of natural increase in the city had been about 1.6 per cent, thus the contribution of net migration to the growth of the city equalled 1.9 per cent per year (table 2). According to the figures in table 2, some 43 per cent of the population growth of the city between 1989 and 1994 resulted from natural increase and 57 per cent from net migration.

The impression of a declining rate of migration to the city given by table 2 could be spurious. The migration rate is calculated as a simple residual by subtracting the rate of natural increase from the population growth rate. Any undercount of the total population would yield a lower estimate of net migration. If there has been a recent increase in the number of unregistered migrants to Ho Chi Minh City, both the estimate of the total population and of the migration rate could be biased downward.

**Table 2: Population growth in Ho Chi Minh City, 1989-1994**

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Population (thousands)	3,942	4,113	4,259	4,426	4,582	4,694
Percentage increase from previous year	5.77	4.34	3.55	3.92	3.52	2.44
Annual rate of natural increase (%)	1.53	1.52	1.61	1.61	1.58	1.57
Annual migration rate (%)	4.24	2.82	1.94	2.31	1.94	0.87

Source: Statistical Office of HCMC, *Statistical Yearbook*.

## Spontaneous versus organized migration

Prior to 1986, most migration in Viet Nam was organized and sponsored by the Government. This took the form of allocation of workers for employment, the transfer of state employees and the movement of persons to rural resettlement areas, or new economic zones. Other forms of migration were restricted.

In 1986, the Sixth Party Congress adopted a policy of economic liberalization referred to as *doi moi* (renovation). A fundamental purpose of *doi moi* is to shift from a centrally planned economy based chiefly on public ownership of the means of production to a multi-sector economy operating under a market mechanism with state management and a socialist orientation. The reforms effected by the new policies have resulted in an upsurge of "spontaneous" migration, i.e. migration neither organized nor sponsored by the Government. Spontaneous migration has developed in both rural and urban areas.

Spontaneous migration to such large cities as Ho Chi Minh City was stimulated by newly created employment opportunities in the private sector, the possibility of self-employment, and a relaxation of regulations concerning residence permits. The situation in Viet Nam is similar to that in China, another country with an economy in transition. There are many parallels between the "floating population" in Chinese cities and spontaneous migrants in Viet Nam, primarily that they have been attracted by new economic opportunities and are not fully-registered residents of the cities. See, for example, Banister and Taylor (1989) and Goldstein and Goldstein (1985).

## Household population

The distribution of the population residing in the 1,000 sampled households is presented in table 3, disaggregated by sex, age group and migration status. Females predominate in the survey population, especially among migrants. Females compose 51 per cent of the non-migrant population, 53 per cent of migrants during the period 1984-1989, and 55 per cent of the migrants who arrived in 1990 or later. While many females move to Ho Chi Minh City with their families, employment and schooling are important factors in attracting them to the city. As will be seen later, 58 per cent of the female migrants aged 13 years and older are in the labour force and another 15 per cent are students. Large numbers of women work in sales and manufacturing, and as family servants.

**Table 3: Distribution of the sampled household population by age, sex and migration status**

Age	Migration status								
	Non-migrants			Migrants					
				1984-1989			After 1989		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
0-4	11.9	10.6	11.2	—	—	—	3.7	2.3	2.9
5-9	9.6	7.5	8.5	4.7	5.4	5.0	6.3	4.4	5.2
10-14	7.9	7.6	7.7	9.9	9.5	9.7	7.2	4.4	5.6
15-19	8.7	8.9	8.8	13.1	11.5	12.3	16.0	17.3	16.7
20-24	11.4	10.9	11.1	14.2	13.6	13.9	23.4	21.8	22.5
25-29	10.4	11.4	11.0	14.6	14.9	14.8	11.9	15.0	13.6
30-34	9.9	10.1	10.0	13.7	13.2	13.4	9.5	9.9	9.7
35-39	9.0	7.8	8.4	7.9	7.5	7.7	5.2	6.2	5.7
40-44	4.8	6.9	5.9	6.9	7.0	7.0	5.2	4.9	5.1
45-49	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.5	3.5	3.5
50-54	2.8	3.6	3.2	2.4	4.9	3.7	3.0	1.8	2.3
55-59	2.4	3.1	2.7	3.8	2.5	3.1	1.7	2.5	2.1
60-64	3.8	2.3	3.0	1.7	2.3	2.0	0.7	1.6	1.2
65+	4.0	5.8	5.0	3.2	4.0	3.6	2.8	4.6	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	1,789	1,853	3,642	534	598	1,132	462	568	1,030

Source: Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

Among the non-migrants in the surveyed households, there are similar proportions in each quinquennial age group up to age 39. Migrants, especially recent migrants, are much more concentrated in the young working ages of 15-29. Among migrants to the city between 1984 and 1989, 41 per cent were aged 15-29 at the time of the survey. Among migrants in 1990 and later, 53 per cent were aged 15-29, with 22.5 per cent in the single age group of 20-24 years. In contrast, only 31 per cent of non-migrants were in the age group 15-29.

The increasing concentration of migrants in the young working ages implies that family migration has declined in importance and that individual migration is becoming more prevalent, as would be expected from the shift from organized to spontaneous migration. That impression is reinforced when the age of migrants at the time of their move is examined (table 4). Among migrants during the period 1984-1989, 32 per cent were under age 15 and 41 per cent were aged 15-29 at the time of migration. Among the recent migrants, however, only 20 per cent were under age 15 and 52 per cent were aged 15-29.

**Table 4: Percentage distribution of migrants by age at the time of move**

Age group	Period of arrival	
	1984-1989	After 1989
0-14	32.1	19.7
15-29	41.0	52.0
30-49	19.4	19.8
50-64	5.8	5.6
65 +	1.6	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0
Number	1,132	1,030

*Source:* Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

Ho Chi Minh City attracts about one-third of its migrants from the Mekong River Delta (in the southern part of the country), with close to 20 per cent each also coming from the Red River Delta (where Hanoi is located) and the Central Coast. The decline in the proportion of migrants coming from the Red River Delta and the increase in the share from the Central Coast between the earlier and recent periods probably reflects a relative decline in official migration and an increase in individual and unofficial migration.

Table 6 gives the impression that migrants to Ho Chi Minh City have about one year more of general education than non-migrants. Some of the difference is explained by the different age structures of the migrants and non-migrants, however. Migrants are heavily concentrated in the ages 15-29,

**Table 5: Percentage distribution of migrants to Ho Chi Minh City by region of origin**

Region of origin	Period of arrival	
	1984-1989	After 1989
Northern Highlands	3.5	1.8
Red River Delta	22.0	18.3
North Central	7.2	8.5
Central Coast	15.2	19.3
Central Highlands	1.7	2.1
South-eastern Region	15.1	15.6
Mekong Delta	32.5	33.6
Overseas	2.8	0.6
Unknown	0.1	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0
Number	1,132	1,030

*Source:* Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

**Table 6. Average number of years of general education of the sampled household population aged 5 years and above, by sex and migration status**

Migration status	Average years of general education			
	Male	Number	Female	Number
Non-migrant	7.4	1,577	6.9	1,656
Migrant 1984-1989	8.6	534	7.5	598
Migrant after 1989	9.0	445	8.0	555
All respondents	8.0	2,556	7.2	2,809

*Source:* Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

where educational levels are highest, whereas more of the non-migrants are in the age groups 5-9 and 60 and older.

The fact that 53 per cent of recent migrants are aged 15-29, compared with 41 per cent of migrants between 1984 and 1989, probably explains why the more recent migrants have an average of half a year more of education.

Table 7 indicates that migrants and non-migrants are about equally likely to be economically active and that their unemployment rates are only marginally different. Among the household population in the survey, 67 per cent of non-migrants and 65 per cent of migrants aged 13 and older were in the labour force. The distribution by employment status of migrants who came to Ho Chi Minh City between 1984 and 1989 is very similar to that of non-migrants (table 7), suggesting that the earlier migrants comprise a greater proportion of organized migrants. The employment distribution of persons who migrated after 1989 reflects a greater share of spontaneous migration in that a significantly higher proportion of them are employed in the private sector. In addition, more recent female migrants are employed in "other categories", which include working as family servants.

About twice the proportion of migrants as non-migrants aged 13 and older are currently attending school, in spite of the older age distribution of the migrants. This implies that the pursuit of further education may be a reason for moving to Ho Chi Minh City.

### Individual respondents

Detailed questions concerning their last move and their economic activity in Ho Chi Minh City were asked of the 704 migrants aged 15 and older who were chosen by selecting one randomly from each sample household containing at least one migrant. About 40 per cent of the individual



**Table 7: Current activity status of the sampled household population aged 13 years and above, by migration status and sex**

Activity status	Migration status								
	Non-migrants			1984-1989			After 1989		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Active population</b>									
Employed by Government	23.6	26.4	24.9	29.2	26.0	27.6	22.1	16.6	19.3
Employed by private sector	22.8	12.5	18.0	23.3	13.8	18.8	32.5	25.6	28.9
Self employed	27.6	38.3	32.7	26.1	40.5	32.5	19.6	36.5	28.4
Employer	2.2	0.9	1.6	1.1	1.3	1.2	0.0	0.3	0.2
Other categories	18.5	18.2	18.3	16.6	12.8	14.8	18.6	17.7	17.9
Unemployed	5.3	3.7	4.5	3.7	5.6	4.5	7.1	3.7	5.3
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Number</b>	974	869	1,843	356	308	664	280	301	581
<b>Inactive population</b>									
Attending school	15.2	26.3	22.1	58.3	33.0	40.0	73.9	35.3	48.5
Homemaker	2.0	43.2	27.6	0.0	39.1	28.0	1.8	41.92	8.2
Others	82.8	30.5	50.3	41.7	27.9	32.0	24.3	22.8	23.3
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Number</b>	342	558	900	120	230	350	111	215	326

Source: Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

**Table 8: Distribution of individual migrants by type of last residence, period of arrival and sex of respondent**

Type of previous residence	Period of arrival					
	1984-1989			After 1989		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Urban	40.0	39.1	39.5	44.6	36.8	39.8
Rural	60.0	60.9	60.5	55.4	63.2	60.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	155	207	362	130	212	342

*Source:* Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

migrants had moved from an urban area and 60 per cent from a rural area (table 8). These proportions are essentially the same for both periods of arrival and do not vary much by sex.

Whereas 54 per cent of the migrants in the household population were females, 60 per cent of the individual migrants were. It is possible that in selecting the migrant member of the household to be interviewed, there was some bias towards choosing a member at home when the interviewer called, thus selecting a disproportionate number of females. As in the household population, the proportion of females is greater among migrants who have arrived more recently. Among individual migrants during the period 1984-1989, 57 per cent were females, but among those arriving after 1989, 62 per cent were. Apparently employment opportunities in Ho Chi Minh City generated by economic liberalization have disproportionately favoured women.

Further evidence that recent migration has been stimulated in part by "renovation" policies is provided in table 9. The proportion of migrants who were single at the time of their move increased from 50 per cent for the period 1984-1989 to 59 per cent for the period after 1989. The increase in the proportion single was greater for female migrants than for male migrants.

For the great majority of migrants, their move to Ho Chi Minh City is the only move they have made since age 15. Seventy per cent had moved only once and another 22 per cent had moved only twice.

A majority of all migrants moved with their families, to join their families, for marriage, or to attend school, rather than primarily for economic reasons. Fifty-three per cent of males but only 32 per cent of females had moved for economic reasons.

**Table 9: Distribution of individual migrants aged 13 years and above at the time of move, by marital status at time of move, period of arrival and sex of respondent**

Marital status	Period of arrival					
	1984-1989			After 1989		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Single	60.2	42.2	49.5	68.0	53.8	59.2
Married	36.8	49.0	44.0	30.5	39.5	36.1
Widowed	0.8	5.7	3.7	0.0	3.3	2.1
Divorced/separated	2.3	3.1	2.8	1.6	3.3	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	133	192	325	128	210	338

*Source:* Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

The greatest proportions of those moving for economic reasons were found among migrants from poorer regions of the country: the Central Highlands (53.9 per cent) and the North Central Region (51.0 per cent). Non-economic reasons were predominant among migrants from the Mekong River Delta (60.5 per cent) and the South-east Region (60.0), reflecting the importance of family networks for migration from these regions located near Ho Chi Minh City (table not shown).

Economic liberalization has not altered the proportion of male migrants moving for economic reasons, but among non-economic reasons migration to attend school has become more important while that for familial reasons has become less important (table 10). There was an equally large increase in the proportion of females who migrated to attend school after 1989. Of course, to the extent that migrant students return home following completion of their studies, migrants who arrived during the period 1984-1989 to attend school would not be captured by the survey.

Among female migrants, the proportion who moved for employment or income reasons increased significantly after 1989, apparently reflecting the impact of "renovation" policies on female employment generation.

### **Employment in Ho Chi Minh City**

Only 54 per cent of the migrants to Ho Chi Minh City looked for work immediately after arriving, which is consistent with the fact that a majority had not moved primarily for economic reasons. While 61 per cent of male migrants sought work upon arrival, only 49 per cent of females did so (table

**Table 10: Distribution of migrants, by main reason for migration, period of arrival and sex of respondent**

Reason for migration	Period of arrival			
	Male		Female	
	1984-1989	After 1989	1984-1989	After 1989
<b>Non-economic factors</b>	<b>44.6</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>71.9</b>	<b>57.2</b>
Familial	29.7	18.5	56.0	33.5
Marital	3.9	3.1	11.1	7.6
Educational	10.3	22.3	4.8	16.0
Others	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Economic factors</b>	<b>54.1</b>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>36.7</b>
Living conditions	11.6	8.5	6.3	8.0
Employment & income	42.5	44.6	18.3	28.7
Others	1.3	3.0	3.5	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Number</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>212</b>

*Source:* Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

not shown). The proportion of men looking for work declined from 64 per cent during the period 1984-1989 to 58 per cent after 1989, partially because more males moved for the purpose of attending school. The proportion of female migrants seeking work increased from 45 to 53 per cent between the two periods, which probably occurred because there were more spontaneous migrants in the latter period. Migrants from rural areas were much more likely (66 per cent) to look for work than those from urban areas (56 per cent).

More than 60 per cent of migrants to Ho Chi Minh City who looked for work upon arrival found a job in less than one month, and nearly 35 per cent found a job in their first week in the city (table 11). The survey would be biased to the extent that migrants who could not find a job within the first month returned home. Male and female migrants found employment about equally quickly. While there was little change in the time required by males to find employment between the period 1984-1989 and after 1989, among female migrants, those arriving after 1989 have been able to secure employment much more quickly than those arriving earlier. This is further evidence that economic liberalization policies have stimulated employment opportunities for women, mostly in light manufacturing, sales and services.

Migrants to Ho Chi Minh City during the period 1984-1989 have an occupational structure very similar to non-migrants, except that a greater proportion of migrants work in trade and sales, and fewer are agricultural

**Table 11: Percentage distribution of migrants who looked for work, by amount of time spent finding their first job in Ho Chi Minh City, period of arrival and sex of respondent**

Length of time spent finding first job	Period of arrival					
	Male			Female		
	1984-1989	After 1989	Total	1984-1989	After 1989	Total
Less than 1 week	33.3	35.5	34.3	26.6	42.0	34.9
1 week to 1 month	29.3	26.3	28.0	24.5	25.9	25.2
1 to 2 months	8.1	7.9	8.0	6.4	6.2	6.3
2 to 3 months	9.1	9.2	9.1	4.3	4.5	4.4
3 to 6 months	5.0	6.6	5.7	5.3	7.1	6.3
6 to 12 months	8.1	13.2	10.3	12.8	9.8	11.2
More than 12 months	7.0	1.3	4.6	19.1	4.5	11.2
Never found job	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	99	76	175	94	112	206

Source: Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

workers (table 12). The fact that the proportion of migrants between 1984 and 1989 who are professional, administrative and related workers is equal to that among non-migrants no doubt results from the transfer of large numbers of government officials to the city following reunification of the country in 1975.

The occupational structure has changed for migrants after 1989. Fewer of them are professional, administrative and related workers while more of them are manufacturing and construction workers. More recent migrants, especially women, are family servants. Among female migrants after 1989, 14 per cent of those working are family servants.

Table 13 confirms that the state sector is a major source of employment for migrants who arrived between 1984 and 1989. A greater proportion of those migrants work in the state sector than do non-migrants. Among migrants in the period 1984-1989 and non-migrants, equal proportions of working men and women were employed by the state sector.

As was observed for occupation, a shift in the sectoral structure of the labour force has occurred for migrants to Ho Chi Minh City after 1989. Smaller proportions of recent migrants are employed by the state sector or in their own family businesses. Considerably greater proportions than among earlier migrants are employed in the private sector (especially for males) and in other families' businesses (especially for females).

**Table 12. Percentage distribution of employed respondents by main occupation, migration status and sex**

Main occupation	Migration status								
	Non-migrants			1984-1989			After 1989		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Administrative, clerical and related	2.0	4.7	3.2	4.1	1.6	2.8	1.2	1.7	1.5
Professional & related	12.2	11.6	12.0	12.4	12.7	12.6	8.2	9.3	8.9
Construction & manufacturing	31.6	20.9	26.6	32.2	22.2	26.5	38.7	28.0	32.5
Agriculture	10.2	8.1	9.2	3.3	2.4	2.8	4.7	1.7	3.0
Transport, post & communications	11.2	0.0	4.3	9.1	0.0	4.5	7.1	0.9	3.5
Trade and sales	14.3	33.7	23.4	18.2	38.9	28.8	9.4	33.0	23.2
Restaurant & hotel	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	1.0	3.5	0.9	2.0
Services	11.2	9.3	10.9	7.4	13.5	10.5	12.8	7.6	9.9
Family servant	2.0	8.1	4.9	1.7	4.8	3.2	5.9	14.4	10.8
Others	7.1	3.5	5.4	9.9	4.0	6.9	8.2	2.5	4.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	98	86	184	122	126	248	85	118	203

Source: Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.



*Since 1989, considerably greater proportions of migrants have been employed by private sector enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City than was the case earlier. Making clothes for export is a labour-intensive enterprise that attracts single workers seeking economic opportunities.*

**Table 13: Percentage distribution of employed respondents, by economic sector of main occupation, migration status and sex of respondent**

Economic sector	Migration status								
	Non-migrants			1984-1989			After 1989		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Own family business	41.8	54.7	47.8	36.9	57.1	47.2	23.5	34.8	30.1
Other's family business	10.2	8.1	9.2	6.6	5.6	6.1	15.3	20.3	18.2
Private sector	24.5	14.0	19.6	27.9	7.9	17.7	34.1	27.1	30.1
State-owned sector	21.4	22.1	21.7	27.0	27.0	27.0	22.4	16.1	18.7
Collective sector	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.5
Foreign-VN joint venture	2.0	1.2	1.6	1.6	2.4	2.0	2.4	1.7	2.0
Others	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	98	86	184	122	126	248	85	118	203

Source: Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.



**Table 14: Average number of hours worked per week in main occupation, by economic sector, migration status and sex of respondent**

Economic sector	Migration status					
	Non-migrant		1984-1989		After 1989	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Own family business	48.7	53.4	59.3	59.0	56.4	61.3
Other's family business	49.2	45.1	64.6	62.9	47.2	62.1
Private sector	57.9	56.2	56.9	56.6	56.5	57.0
State-owned sector	47.3	47.3	51.2	47.7	48.9	53.6
Collective sector	—	—	—	—	77.0	—
Foreign-VN joint venture	54.0	48.0	52.0	58.7	48.0	70.0
Others	—	—	—	—	60.0	—
Average	50.9	51.7	56.7	56.0	53.4	59.2
Number	86	71	122	126	85	118

Source: Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

Both migrants and non-migrants, males and females, work an average of 51 hours or more per week (table 14). Migrants work 4-5 hours per week more than non-migrants, with the discrepancy being greater among women workers. Among non-migrants and migrants during the period 1984-1989, males and females work approximately the same number of hours, but among migrants after 1989, females reported working six hours per week more than males. Employees in the state sector work the fewest hours per week while those working for other families' businesses and in the private sector work the most hours. As these data refer to main occupation, it is possible that many state sector employees have secondary occupations at which they work several more hours.

Among the employed individual respondents, the average monthly income for males is equivalent to US\$55 and that for females is US\$46 (table 15). Figures on income as reported by respondents may not be

**Table 15: Average income of employed respondents age 15 and older, by migration status and sex of respondent**

(Vietnamese Dong<sup>a</sup> per month)

Migration status	Male	Number	Female	Number
Non-migrants	524,200	98	459,900	86
Migrants 1984-1989	692,000	122	551,900	126
Migrants after 1989	482,900	85	431,600	118
Average/total	579,800	305	484,900	330

Source: Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

<sup>a</sup> Note: Values are net income per month in Vietnamese Dong. At the time of the survey, US\$ 1 = VND 10,500.

**Table 16: Average wage per hour worked, for employed respondents, by migration status and sex of respondent**

Migration status	Average hourly wage (VND 1,000)			
	Male	Number	Female	Number
Non-migrants	2.4	83	2.3	71
Migrants 1984-1989	3.3	122	2.7	124
Migrants after 1989	2.5	84	2.1	117
Average/total	2.9	289	2.3	312

*Source:* Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

\* *Note:* For employers and self-employed workers the values are net income per hour worked. Values are in 1,000 Vietnamese Dong. At the time of the survey, US\$ 1 = VND 10,500.

reliable because of a tendency to conceal some income, so the reported figures should be taken as approximations. According to the reported incomes, migrants who arrived between 1984 and 1989 earn more than non-migrants, while migrants after 1989 earn less than either of the other groups. Note that in table 15, the incomes reported for non-migrants refer to persons who migrated to Ho Chi Minh City before 1984. The discrepancy between male and female incomes is greatest among migrants who moved between 1984 and 1989, and least among migrants after 1989.

Average wages per hour worked for employed respondents are presented in table 16. The patterns are very similar to those for reported income shown in table 15.

Contrary to public perceptions, the survey found that migrants are less likely to be employed in the informal sector than are non-migrants (table 17), although the sample bias towards more established migrants may have

**Table 17: Percentage distribution of workers, by type of organization of main occupation, migration status and sex of respondent**

Type of organization	Migration status								
	Non-migrants			1984-1989			After 1989		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Informal	62.7	64.8	63.8	52.4	60.5	56.5	54.8	60.7	57.8
Formal	37.3	35.2	36.2	47.6	39.5	43.5	45.2	39.3	42.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	98	86	184	122	124	246	84	117	201

*Source:* Institute for Economic Research, Survey of Migration to Ho Chi Minh City, 1994.

affected this result. Among non-migrants, approximately the same proportion of males and females work in the informal sector, whereas among migrants significantly more women are in the informal sector.

## Conclusion

Economic liberalization policies pursued by the Government of Viet Nam since 1986 have affected the nature of migration and employment in Ho Chi Minh City. Those policies have promoted the private sector, provided greater scope for self-employment and closed or reduced the size of loss-making state enterprises. Regulations concerning residence have also been relaxed so that many people may work in Ho Chi Minh City with temporary residence permits or by registering with local authorities but not obtaining a residence permit.

The scope of this survey conducted by the Institute for Economic Research did not permit an estimation of whether the rate of migration to Ho Chi Minh City is increasing, but it did indicate several impacts of the "renovation" policies on migration. The proportion of migrants coming from the Red River Delta has declined, reflecting a decrease in organized migration.

Migration flows to Ho Chi Minh City after 1989 are more concentrated in the ages 15-29 and are composed of a greater proportion of females than had been the case previously. More of the recent migrants are single, and more of them have moved to attend school. Among female migrants, there has been an increase in the proportion migrating for economic reasons.

There are several other indications that economic liberalization has had a greater impact on females than males. Recent female migrants have been more likely to seek employment and have found jobs much more quickly than earlier migrants. Recent female migrants are more likely than earlier migrants to work in manufacturing or in the private sector, and they appear to have narrowed the wage gap with men, although it remains considerable. Among both men and women, fewer migrants are employed in the informal sector than are non-migrants.

Although female migrants have benefitted from new economic policies, the gains have not always been easy. Female migrants work more hours for lower wages than do migrant men or non-migrant women.

It is hoped that the results of this survey will assist national and local-level planners to take into account demographic and social changes in preparing plans for social services and urban infrastructure in Ho Chi Minh City.

As females constituted 55 per cent of the recent migrants to the City in the survey, due attention should be paid to their situation, especially that of women workers, women heads of households and those in poverty. The survey also found that 54 per cent of recent female migrants were between the ages of 15 and 29. This prevalence of young women among migrants implies that local government should take special care to ensure that they have access to adequate health and social services, particularly those related to reproductive health, in order to avert potential problems among this vulnerable group of migrants.

### Footnote

1. The survey was conducted as part of project VIE/93/P02 financed by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Under the same project, the Centre for Population and Human Resource Studies, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs conducted similar surveys in Dong Nai Province and the city of Vung Tau (Doan and Trinh, 1996).

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