

Population Census 2005



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Highlights:

The 2005 Population Census is the third census undertaken by the Lao PDR Government. It was carried out in March 2005, ten years after the second census 1995.

This report presents the major findings from the census data and attempts to highlight the main characteristics of the population in Lao PDR at the time of the Census. Efforts have been made to present the results in an easily understandable text and layout. This report is available, as the earlier ones, in Lao and English in separate reports.

Chapter 1: Population size and composition

This chapter deals with the size and composition of the Lao PDR population. The results are based on the Lao PDR de jure population census that was taken on March 1, 2005. The enumerated population consisted of Lao citizens as well as citizens of other countries who had been granted permanent residence in Lao PDR. In addition Lao citizens residing abroad, e.g., diplomatic staffs, were also enumerated. The enumeration was organized by household.

1.1: Population size and Growth

In March 2005, Lao PDR had a total population of 5.62 million of which 2.82 million were females and 2.80 million were males. The population then is evenly divided between the sexes.

1.2: Intercensal Population size and Growth during 1995 - 2005

Since the last census taken in March 1995 the population has grown by 1 047 000 persons or by 2.1 percent per year. This is slightly more than the corresponding 991 000 during the previous intercensal period (1985-95). The intercensal period 1995-2005 has witnessed negative net-migration, i.e., more persons have emigrated than immigrated. Persons who had been absent from their usual place of residence for more than six months were not counted in the census.

Intercensal population increase is the difference between two neighboring censuses. In the absence of significant migration in and out of the country, intercensal population increase becomes the same as the natural increase, the difference between births and deaths during the period. Analysis of the population growth rate is given in chapter 9 which deals with population projections. The enumerated population in 2005 is in good agreement with the forecasts made in connection with analysis of the 1995 Lao population census.

1.3: Age and Sex Composition

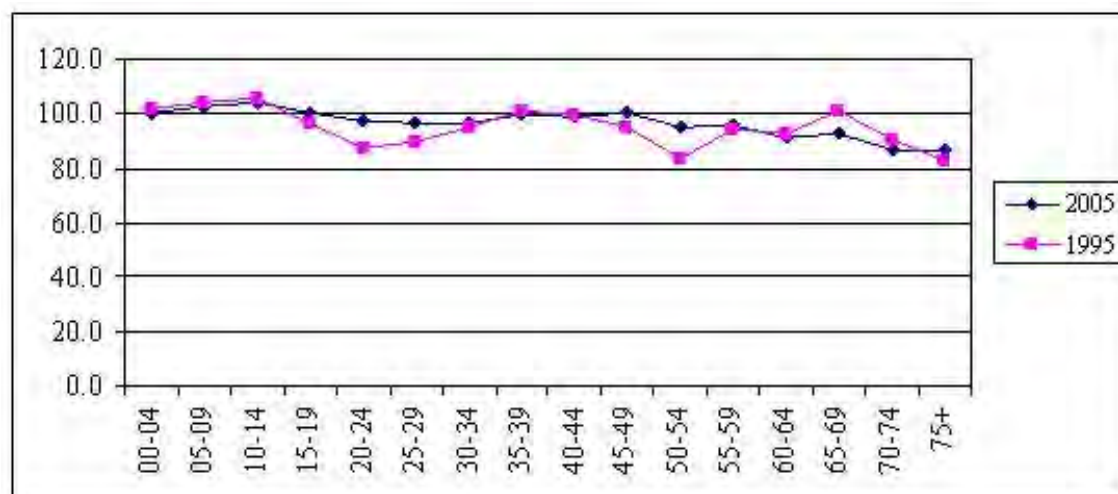
The age and sex-distributions of the population are shown in table 1.1. The age-distribution mirrors past variability in fertility, mortality and migration. The age and sex-distribution is often illustrated by means of a [population pyramid](#). The age-pyramid of Lao PDR continues to be broadly based; a characteristic of a young population. About 50 percent of the population is currently younger than 20 years. Compared to 1995 census, the proportion aged less than 15 years has declined (from 44 to 39 percent). At the same time the population at working ages, both male and females, has increased by about 4 percent.

Age and-Sex Distributions in the 1995 and 2005 Population Censuses

Age group	1995 Census			2005 Census		
	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total
0-14	43	45	44	39	40	39
15-64	53	51	53	57	56	57
65+	4	4	4	4	4	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

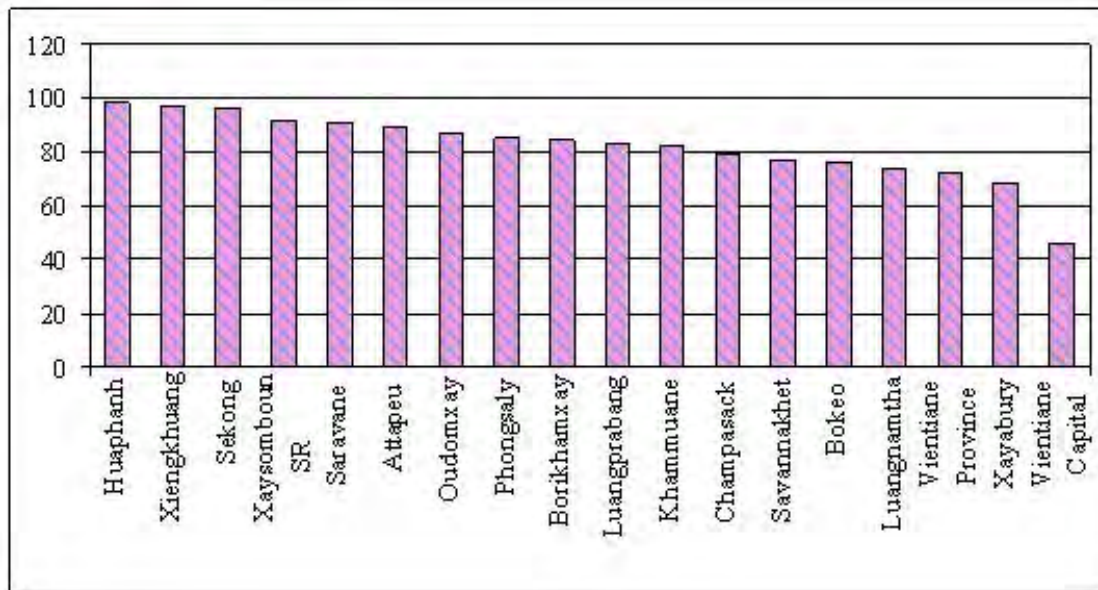
1.4: Sex Ratio

Definition: The sex ratio is the number of males per 100 females . Hence, a ratio below 100 indicates that there are more females than males. In 2005 the sex ratio was 99.3 as compared to 97.7 in 1995 and 96.1 in 1985. Excess emigration of males over females during the last decade has contributed to a better balanced sex-distribution (table 1.1). The sex-distribution ha become more even for the total population as well as across age groups (see figure 1.1).



1.5: Dependency Ratio

The Dependency Ratio is the ratio of the population aged 0-14 and 65+ to the population aged 15-64 years. The ratio was 0.8 in 2005 compared to 1.1 in 1995. Thus, in 1995 more than 100 persons were dependent on 100 persons at working ages. In 2005 the dependency ratio had dropped to 76 dependents per 100 persons. However there were large differences across provinces. In Vientiane Capital there were 46 dependents for every 100 persons at working ages while in Huaphanh, Xiengkhuang and Sekong there were almost 100 dependents per 100 at working ages. The projections in chapter 9 indicate that the dependency ratio is likely to fall during the coming years.



1.6: Marital Status

The census pointed to 38 percent being married, 57 percent never married, 1 percent divorced/separated and 3 percent widowed. There were small differences among provinces. The marital status changes since the 1995 Census are small both at the national and provincial levels. The age-distribution, sex and marital status are given in tables 1.3.1, 1.3.2 and 1.4. These tables show the differences by sex and age.

Because children up to age 14 rarely are married, it is convenient to study marital status for those aged 15 and over. There are e.g., more divorced and widowed females than males. Larger proportions of women than men were not remarried after they had lost their spouse or separated. The higher percentages of single men than single women in the younger age groups may have several explanations such as men tending to marry at later ages than women. But there may also be some reporting errors among women reflecting reluctance to reveal marital status.

**Percentage Distribution of Population Aged 15 and Above
by Marital Status, Sex and Urban/Rural Areas**

Sex Region	Total	Marital status			
		Never Married	Married	Widowed	Divorced/ separated
Total	100	29	63	2	5
Female	100	25	63	3	8
Male	100	33	63	1	2
Urban	100	37	56	2	4
Female	100	33	56	3	7
Male	100	41	55	1	1
Rural	100	26	66	2	5
With Road					
Female	100	22	66	3	8
Male	100	30	66	1	2
Rural Without road	100	22	69	2	6
Female	100	19	68	3	9
Male	100	25	71	1	3

Percentage Distribution of Population Aged 15 and Above by Marital Status, Sex and Urban/Rural Areas

**Percentage of Singles (Never Married, Divorced/Separated or Widowed) Aged 15
and Above by Age Group and Urban/Rural Areas**

Sex Region	Age group							
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50+
Total	88	52	24	13	9	9	11	27
Female	81	41	19	13	12	13	17	41
Male	94	64	29	12	7	5	5	12
Urban	94	71	37	18	12	10	11	26
Female	90	59	29	18	14	15	17	40
Male	98	82	46	19	9	6	5	11
Rural With Road	86	45	19	10	8	9	11	28
Female	79	33	15	11	11	13	16	42
Male	94	57	22	10	6	5	5	12
Rural Without road	81	34	14	9	8	9	11	28
Female	73	27	13	10	10	13	17	42
Male	89	43	16	8	5	5	5	13

Percentage of Singles (Never Married, Divorced/Separated or Widowed) Aged 15 and Above by Age Group and

1.7: Citizenship

The distribution of the population by country of citizenship is given in table 1.4. The majority, 99.6 percent, was Lao citizens. Vietnamese were 0.2 percent. Other citizens amounted to less than 0.1 percent of the total population.

Because the Census only enumerated Lao citizens and foreigners with permanent residence permit, it did not enumerate all foreigners staying in the country, even if they had stayed for more than six months. The number of foreigners was actually less than in 1995 (table 1.4), possibly resulting from some of them having received Lao citizenship after that time.

1.8: Religion

The leading religion was Buddhism which presented 67 percent. About 85 000 or 1.5 percent declared themselves as Christians. Muslim and Bahai represented less than 1 percent. Animism was not regarded as a religion and was included in "Other" which accounted for about 30.9 percent of the population (see table 1.5).

1.9: Ethnic Group

In the Census, Lao citizens were asked about their ethnicity. The Census identified 49 different ethnic groups. The distribution of population with respect to ethnicity is given in table 1.6.

Table 1.6 shows that almost 55 percent were Lao, 11 percent Khmou and 8 percent Hmong. In most provinces a few ethnic groups make most of the population – Lao in Vientiane Capital, Vientiane Province, Xayaboury, Khammuane, Savannakhet, Saravane and Champasack, Akha, Khmou and Singsily in Phongsaly, Akha and Khmou in Luangnamtha, Khmou in Oudomxay, Khmou, Lue, Lao, Hmong and Lamed in Bokeo, Khmou, Lao and Hmong in Luangprabang, Tai, Lao and Hmong in Huaphanh, Lao and Hmong in Xiengkhuang, Tai and Lao in Borikhamxay, Katu, Triang and Harak in Sekong, Lao, Oy and Brao in Attapeu and Hmong, Lao and Khmou in Xaysomboon SR.

Chapter 2: Population distribution and migration

People were enumerated in the geographical place in which they were present on the day of the census given that this place was their usual residence (usual defined as the person having lived there at least during the last six months). If that condition was not fulfilled the person was enumerated at the village maintaining his/her family book. For all persons enumerated it is possible to identify residence in village, district and province and whether the village is located in urban and rural areas.

The five criteria's for urban villages:

- ◊ The village must lie in the municipal vicinity where the district or provincial authority is located, there are more than 600 residents or more than 100 households
- ◊ There is a road for motor vehicles to get access to the village
- ◊ The majority of households in the village are electrified
- ◊ There is a tap water supply in service to the majority of households
- ◊ There is a market in the village

Rural areas were divided into two categories, those with access to road and those without access to road.

Four questions were the basis for migration information:

- ◊ Where was (name) born (by district, province and foreign country codes)

- Where was (name) living at last census in March 1995
- How many persons (enumerated) had moved in to the household during the last twelve months prior to the census
- How many persons have moved out from the household during the last twelve months prior to the census

The Lao Census 2005 thus collected three types of internal migration information.

- Migration since birth with district as the lowest regional level (movements within districts are not registered),
- Migration since last census March 1995 also with district as lowest regional level, and
- Migration the last twelve months prior to the census

The first two pieces of information were identical with those of the 1995 census. Migration the last twelve months before the census was not asked in the 1995 census.

Population distribution is of particular important for planning purposes, especially when data is disaggregated by geographic subdivision such as provinces and districts.

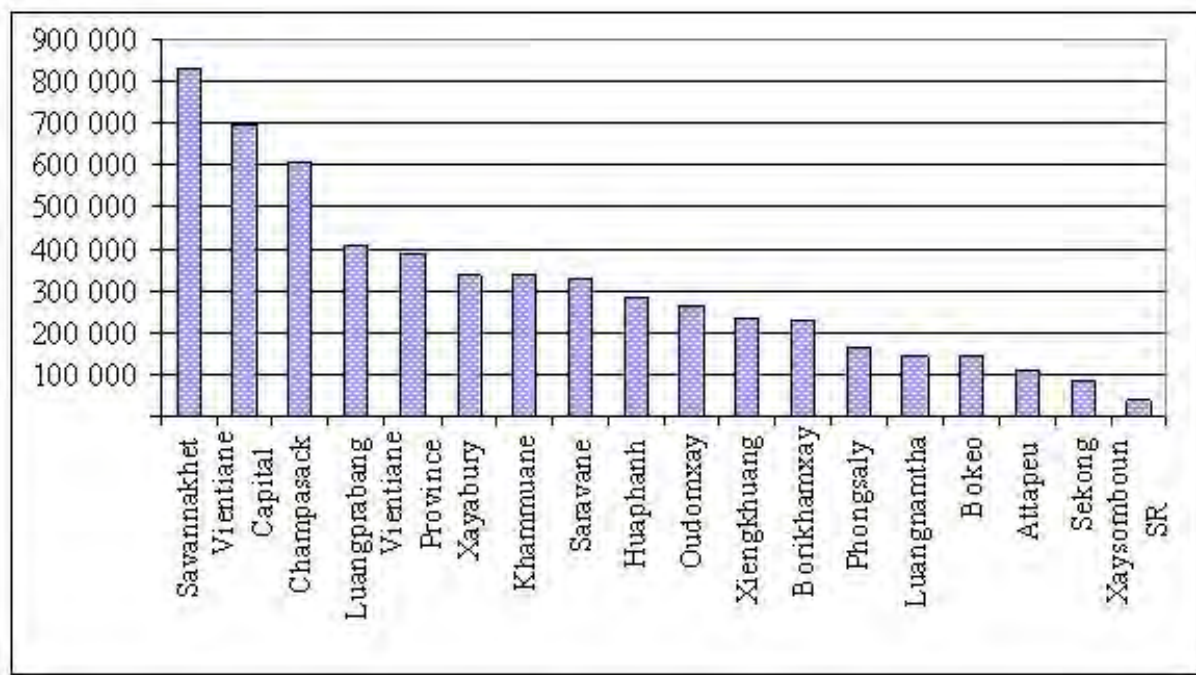
2.1. Population Size and Distribution by Province

The results from the 2005 Census are distributed across 16 provinces, Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Oudomxay, Bokeo, Luangprabang, Huaphanh, Xayaboury, Xiengkhuang, Vientiane Province, Borikhamxay, Khammuane, Savannakhet, Saravane, Sekong, Champasack, Attapeu, 1 Capital and Xaysomboon Special Region (SR). The provinces are the same as in the 1995 Census with the only difference that 2 districts, Longsan and Hom districts, were moved from Xaysomboon SR to Vientiane Province.

Data however are presented by urban villages, rural villages with access to road and rural villages without access to road. In practice, urban villages constitute the villages that form the principal towns in the provinces. Other villages are rural villages and road accessibility is based on whether there is a road that can be used in the rainy and dry seasons passing through.

Changes in the population at the provincial level depend on natural increase and net-migration, domestically and internationally. Savannakhet is the most populous province with a population of 826 000. While the country's population has increased by 23 percent since 1995, some provinces like Borikhamxay, Vientiane C, Vientiane P. and surprisingly Sekong have population increases of more than 30 percent. Provinces such as Xaysomboon SR, Phongsaly, Luangprabang, Xiengkhuang, and Huaphanh have had slower population growth. For Xaysomboon SR the population is lower due to administrative changes (see table 2.1).

The reasons for these different developments are mainly due to internal migration (Figure 2.1. Population by Province).



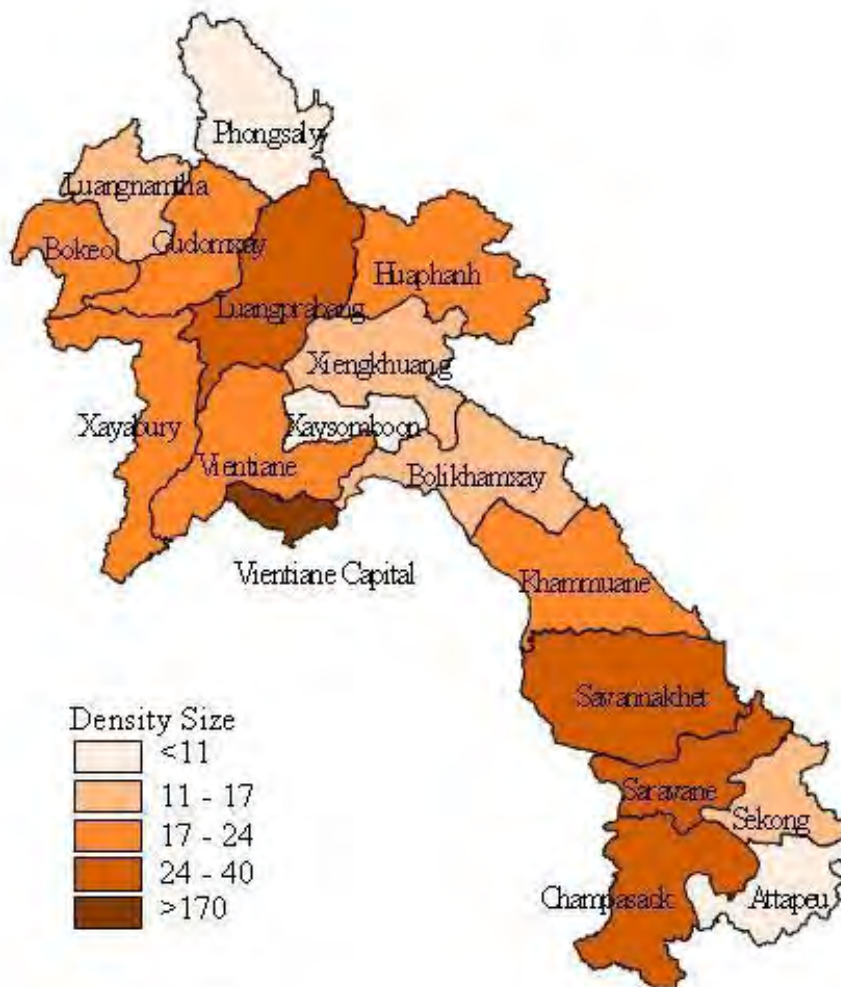
2.1.1 Urban/Rural Population

About 73 percent of population lives in rural areas. Since 1995 there has been a substantial movement from rural to urban areas across all provinces. In 1995, 83 percent of the population lived in rural areas. This trend to move to cities has been particularly strong in provinces such as Borikhamxay, Vientiane Capital, Xayaboury and Xiengkhuang, but slow in Oudomxay (no such movements), Luangnamtha, Huaphanh, Saravane, and Sekong. There is a positive correlation between high population increase and movements to cities, which suggests that internal migration plays an important role.

Vientiane Capital had the highest proportion in urban areas about 82 percent and Saravane the lowest, about 9 percent (see table 2.2).

2.1.2 Population Density

Density of Population by Province



The population density of Lao PDR has increased from 15 persons per square kilometer in 1985 to 19 in 1995 and to 24 persons in 2005.

From table 2.3 it will be seen that the population density ranges from about 10 persons in Xaysomboon SR, Attapeu, Sekong and Phongsaly to 178 persons per square kilometer in Vientiane Capital.

2.2. Internal and External Migration

Questions concerning internal migration provide information on lifetime (place of birth) migration and intercensal migration. Lifetime and intercensal migration are crude measures of internal migration, since neither the timing nor the possibility of intermediate moves are considered. Also, persons who have moved within districts have not been recorded. Lifetime and intercensal migration can be recorded as movements between districts and provinces (internal migration) and as external migration if people have moved in (back) from other countries. Persons who have emigrated during the intercensal period have not been enumerated. Net-migration has been estimated by means of population projections.

2.3. Life-time Internal Migration

The majority of the population (82 percent) was enumerated in the same district as they were born in (table 2.4). The lifetime migration was of the same size as in 1995. For people living in Vientiane Capital 41 percent were not born in the

same districts as they now live in. Low lifetime migration was recorded for people living in Phongsaly, Huaphanh, Saravane and Savannakhet.

2.4. Intercensal Internal Migration

For those born prior to 1995, i.e., the population aged 10 years and over, almost 92 percent were enumerated in the same district as in 1995. This figure was actually higher than in 1995 when 86 percent were enumerated in the same district as in 1985.

Data about intercensal migration is shown in Table 2.5. In Vientiane Capital and Xaysomboun SR, 81 percent of the population in 2005 were enumerated in the same district as 10 years ago. The lowest movements for people in Huaphanh, Xayaboury, Khammuane, Savannakhet, Saravane, Champasack and Attapeu. Although migration appears placid it still involves that about 350 000 people have moved since 1995 and of those about 185 000 have actually moved to another province.(Figure 2.2. Intercensal Provincial Net-migration 1995-2005).

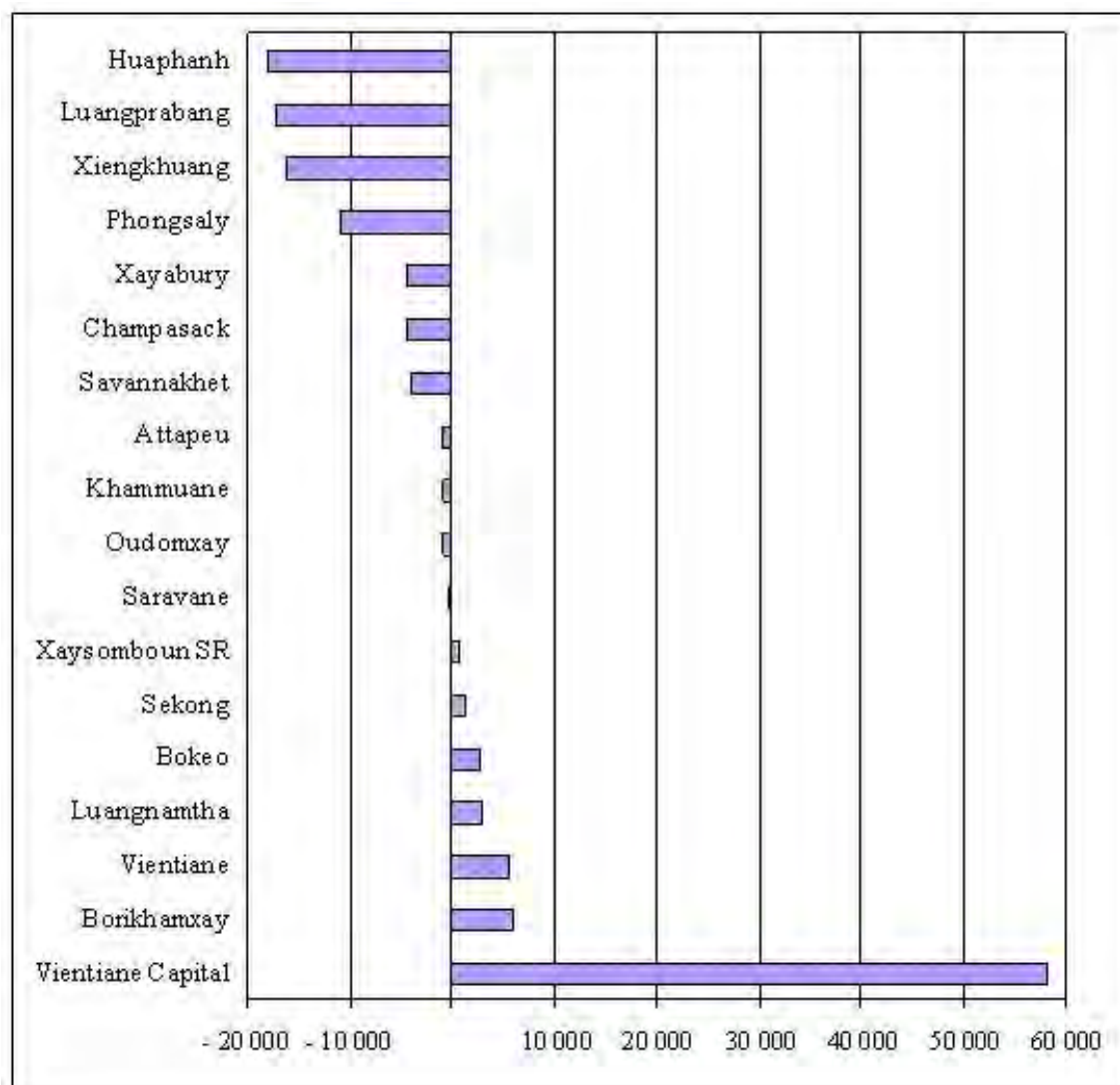


Figure 2.2 shows net intercensal migration between provinces since 1995. It shows that Vientiane Capital has taken the overwhelming part of the migration. Positive flows are also recorded for Borikhamxay, Vientiane P., Bokeo, Luangnamtha and Sekong. The majority of the provinces have experienced negative net-migration particularly the northern provinces Huaphanh, Luangprabang, Xiengkhuang, Phongsaly, Savannakhet and Champasack.

Between the two censuses 72 800 people moved to Vientiane Capital; about 54 percent from the Northern provinces, 29 percent from Central Laos and 17 percent from the South. From the Vientiane Capital 14 500 moved mostly to the central and southern parts of the country.

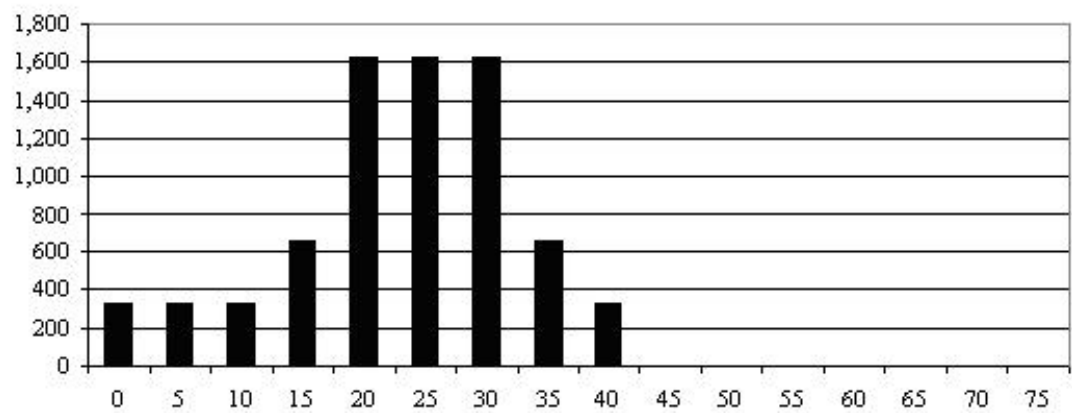
In total, just under 200 000 persons have moved to another province since the 1995 census, of which 97 000 were men

and 84 000 women. Younger age groups dominate for both sexes. Very few persons at ages 65+ move across provincial borders.

2.5. Intercensal External Migration

About 7 000 persons enumerated in the 2005 census were staying in foreign countries at the time of the 1995 census. The majority (about 75 percent) were Lao citizens who had moved back to Laos during the intercensal period. The Vietnamese constituted the other main group (about 16 percent).

External net-migration for the intercensal period has been estimated using the censuses taken in 1995 and 2005 as well as current estimates of fertility and mortality. (See chapter 6 and 7 for details). The estimated net-migration should be seen as somewhat approximate -15 000 net-migrants per year during the intercensal period. Net-migration for males and females is of the same magnitude, about 7 500 persons per year. The age distribution of net-migrants, also estimated, reflects the assumption that these persons predominantly are at working ages (labor force migration). The actual age distribution of net-migrants cannot, however, be accurately estimated from the censuses. (Figure 2.3. Age Distribution of Net-Migration for both Sexes)



2.6. Internal Migration during 12 Months Prior to the Census

Contrary to the 1995 census, the 2005 census has also captured the migration within the country and abroad during the past 12 months. About 53 600 people had migrated which is a lot more than the average annual intercensal migration 1995–2005. About 60 percent had moved within the same province, and about 40 percent of all movements to a province from another, 40 percent had gone to Vientiane Capital.

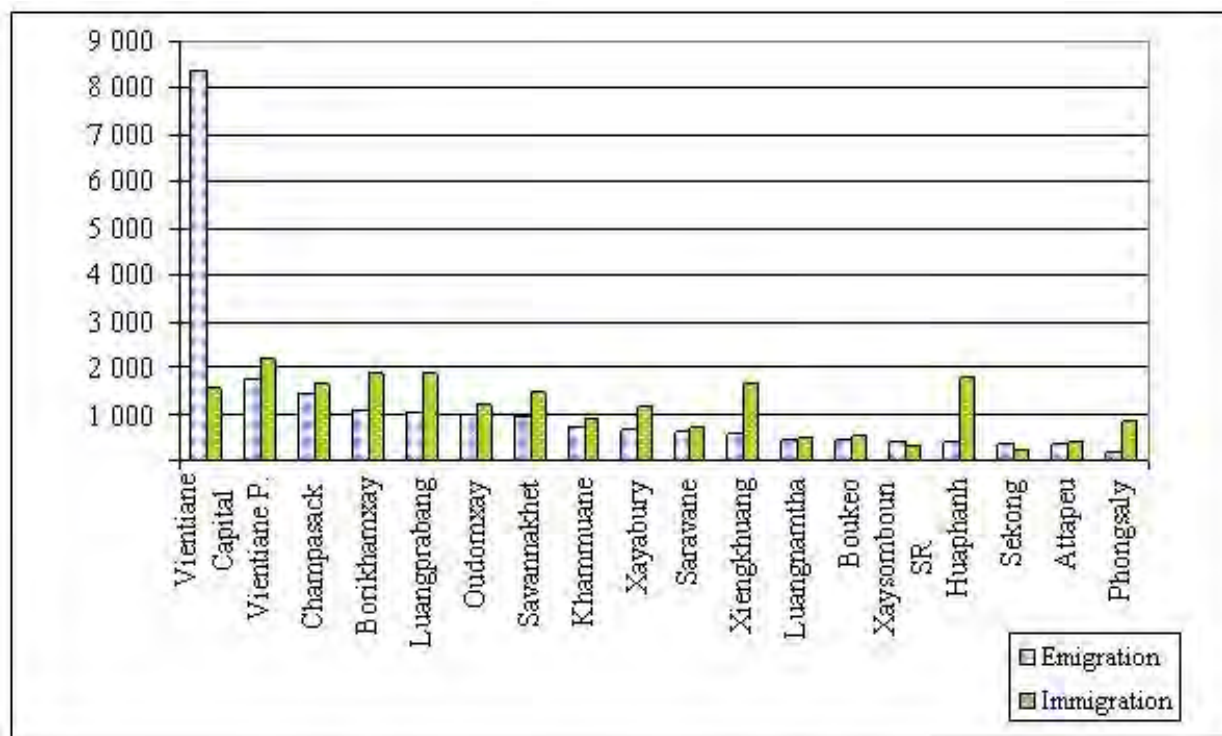
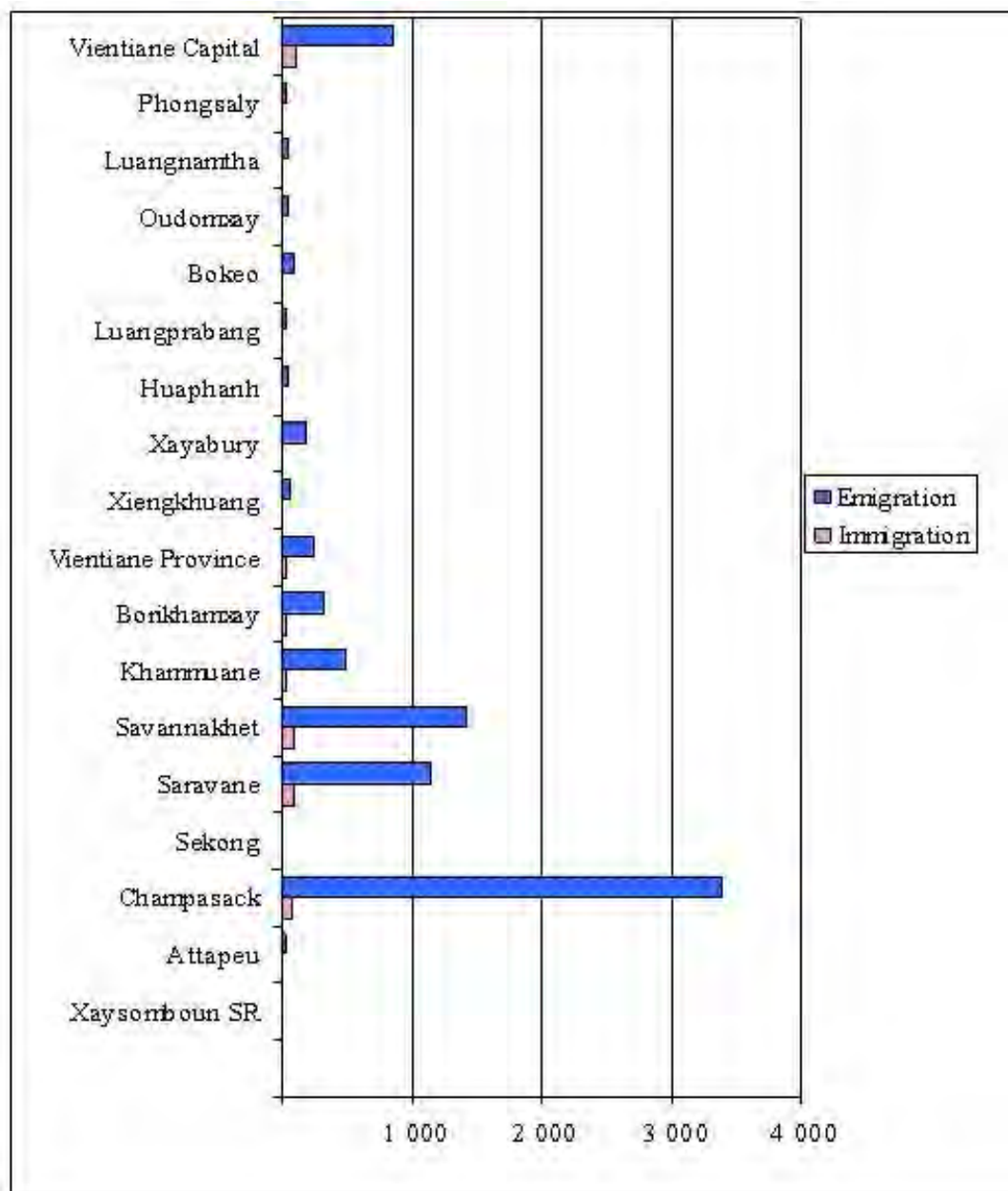


Figure 2.4 shows gross flows (from and to a province) while Figure 2.5 illustrates provincial net flows. Vientiane Capital received the main bulk of migration. Of the other provinces only Sekong and Xaysomboon had positive net-migration. Huaphanh, Xiengkhuang and Luangprabang experienced the largest net-outflow.

2.7. Internal Migration during 12 Months Prior to the Census

Migration during the last twelve months preceding the census also involves migration to and from foreign countries. The number of people moving to Laos from abroad was small (about 500) while those moving to foreign countries numbered roughly 8 500. Hence, negative net-migration took place. The main bulk of emigrants came from the southern provinces such as Champasack, Savannakhet and Saravane and to a lesser extent from the central provinces while the Northern provinces had few emigrants. Almost 80 percent of the emigrants come from rural areas. (Figure 2.6. Immigration and Emigration during the last 12 Months Prior to the 2005 Census).



Chapter 3: Household characteristics

This chapter discusses household characteristics recorded in the 2005 Lao Census. Distinction was made between private and collective households.

A private household can be single person or multi-person households. (A) a single person household comprises of a dwelling unit, arranging for food and other life necessities on his/her own without joining other persons and possessing his/her own civil registration book. (B) a multi-person household comprises of a dwelling unit, and who together arrange for food and other life necessities and share a common registration book.

A collective household consists of accommodation units of a government, organization, enterprise, school, temple, hospital, etc. To be enumerated in a collective household the person must be registered under a common registration book for the collective household.

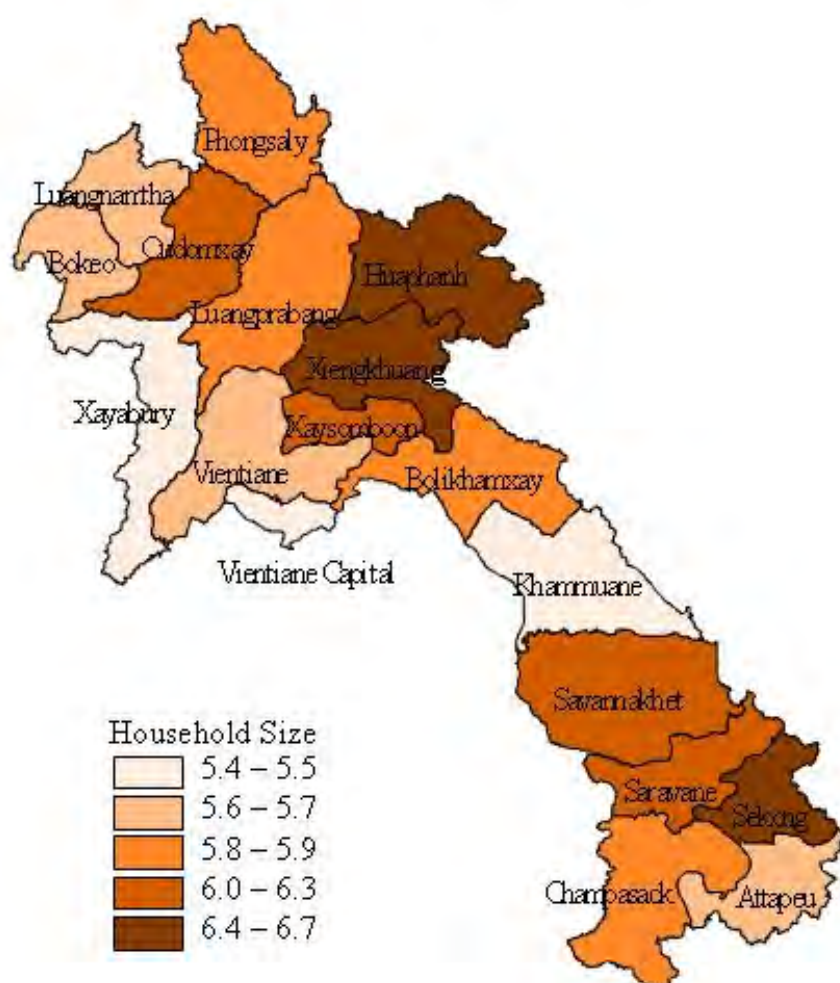
A household is not the same as a family. The difference is that a household may consist of one person or more persons not necessarily related by blood. A family must have at least two related members. The concept of family is not used in the census. In practice, however, a household is usually composed of a single family, or contains more than one family.

2.1. Number of Household and Household Size

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the total household population, in private households, numbers of households, and average household size by province and region. There were almost 952 386 private households in the country with a total population of almost 5.6 million persons. The average household size was 5.9 persons, slightly lower than in the 1995 census. The remainder of the population about 123 000 persons were living in collective households.

The distribution of household size by province and urban/rural presented in table 3.1 and 3.2. The provinces Sekong, Huaphanh and Xiengkhuang had the highest average household size about 6.5 members while Xayaboury, Vientiane Capital and Khammuane had the lowest average size about 5.5 members.

Household Size by Province



The household size is generally lower in urban areas as compared to rural areas and the size is also somewhat lower in rural areas with access to road than in areas without access to road.

Table 3.4 also shows the distribution of private households by size of household. Just over 1 percent of the households are single-person households, while 4 percent have more than 10 members, with 3 percent in urban, 4 in rural with road and 5.5 percent in rural without access to road. (Household Size by province)

3.2. Household Headship

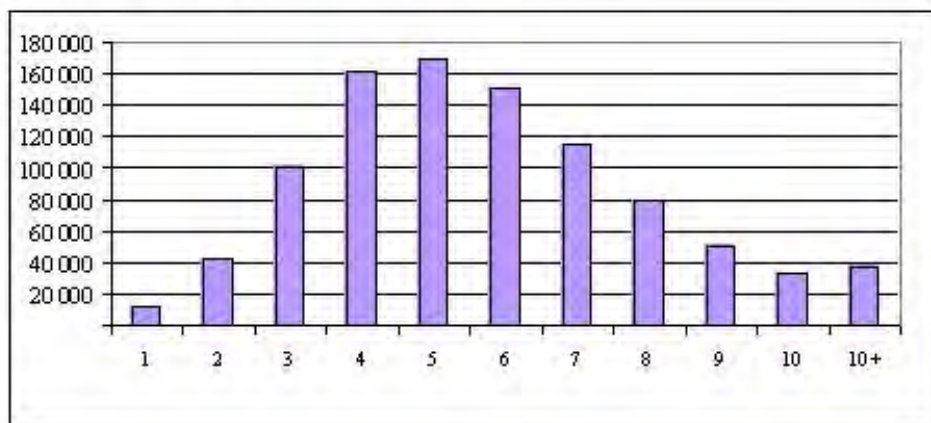
Household headship is a household member who is recognized as a head of household. This person can be male or female.

On average 10 percent of private households were headed by women, in urban households 14 percent and in rural areas without road 7 percent (see table 3.4).

3.3. Collective Household

Table 3.7 shows that there are more males than females in collective households. On average women presented about one third and the adults at ages 15-24 make up two thirds of all collective household members. Further, one third of collective households are located in Vientiane Capital. Small size collective households are most common but there are a few having 100 and more members, most of them situated in Vientiane Capital and Vientiane Province. (Figure 3.1. Private Households by Household Size)

Figure 3.1. Private Households by Household Size



Chapter 4: Education and literacy

Educational characteristics of the population in the 2005 Lao Census were restricted to persons aged 6 years and over. The information on education and literacy was obtained by three standard questions on:

- ◊ School attendance,
- ◊ Educational attainment, and
- ◊ Literacy

School attendance is defined as attendance at any regular accredited educational institution or program, public or private, for organized learning at any level of education. It was specified as:

Has (name) ever attended school?

- ◊ Never been to school
- ◊ Currently at school
- ◊ Left school
- ◊ (No answer)

Persons who are currently at school or have left school should specify their educational attainment, i.e. their highest grade completed in the educational system divided by basic education and a higher (vocational) education:

Basic education:

- ◊ None (no level completed)
- ◊ Primary school (grades 1-6)
- ◊ Lower secondary school (grades 1-3)
- ◊ Upper secondary school (grades 4-6)

Higher (vocational) education:

- ◊ First level
- ◊ Middle level
- ◊ High level/University
- ◊ Post graduate level
- ◊ Other

Information on level of completed education meant the completion of a full academic year/course. For example, a child currently attending grade one would not have completed grade one yet and would therefore be in the category of “no level completed”. Also, all persons in the category “never been to school” in the question on school attendance were categorized as “No level completed”.

On literacy there was one question only also to be answered by all persons aged 6 years and over:

Can (name) read and write Lao?

Response alternatives:

- ◊ Yes
- ◊ No

In order to obtain correct information on literacy it is necessary to carry out reading as well as writing tests. Such an approach is not viable with the limited time given to the enumeration.

Hence, the measure of literacy rates based on the census information should be considered as fairly crude one.

4.1 Population by School Attendance

Table 4.1 presents the distribution of the population aged six years and above by school attendance by sex, province and urban/rural areas. According to the 2005 census 23 percent of the population had never been to school, 28 percent were at school and 47 percent had left school. A much higher percentage of women than men had never been to school, 30 percent for women compared to 16 percent for men.

As the following table shows, comparing the 2005 census data with the 1995 census data, the share of population “never been to school” has dropped markedly for both sexes but actually more for women than men. Also substantial improvements have been made across regional areas, somewhat better in urban areas. Female attendance in rural areas is still the lowest at 37 percent in 2005.

With increasing ages the proportion of “never been to school” will become larger, as previous cohorts of people had fewer opportunities to attend school. [Figure 4.2](#) describes how this pattern looks like for men and women. In every age group the percentage of women who never went to school is higher than for men, but the difference grows by increasing ages.

Those who have “left school” can be divided into four categories, (a) those, who are above school ages, (more than 16 for basic education) and have left without completing all grades and (b) those in the same ages that have left school with completion and (c) those who are still at school ages and have left school with completed basic education and finally (d) those whose at the same ages have left school with incomplete basic education. Categories (a) and (d) are “drop outs”.

Table 4.2 shows the percentages of those at school age who already left school are lower in 2005 than in 1995 in age groups 6-9 and 10-14 but higher in the age group 15-19. In 2005, in this group 42 percent had left school (33 percent for girls and 50 percent for boys) compared to 37 percent in 1995, (41 and 33 percent for girls and boys, respectively).

Although school attendance has improved since 1995, it seems there is a tendency to leave school earlier. [Figure 4.1](#) also illustrates school attendance (never been to school) by province. Most people 6 years and above have attended school in the Capital while almost half of that population in Phongsaly had never been to school.

School attendance by sex and ethnic group is presented in Tables 4.3 for both sexes and 4.3.1 for females and 4.3.2 for males. The data reveal that 12 percent of Lao had never gone to school and a few other groups have attendance below 20 percent. Among the larger ethnic groups 33 percent of Khmou had never been to school, 42 percent of Hmong and 25

percent of Phouthay. For Tri, Akha and Lolo the percentages of never been to school are as high as 75 percent and more. However, there have been improvements for all ethnic groups but females are behind in all groups; low differences among some groups such as Lao, Ngouan, Thaineua, Thaen and Moy or large differences for groups like Lamed, Katang, Ta-oy, Cheng, Sdang, Pacoh and Hmong.

4.2. School Enrolment

School enrolment rates are the number of persons currently attending school per hundred persons in the same age group. Such calculations are presented in Table 4.4 for females, males and both sexes for single years starting from age 6 up to 25 years. The rationale for setting the limit at 25 is that there are very few people attending school after that age. The table shows that the enrolment rate peaks at 11 years (90 percent for males and 86 percent for females) and then declines quite rapidly. It also demonstrates that enrolment is higher for boys and girls across all ages but the differences are rather small for ages up to 10 years.

School enrolment rates have improved between 1995 and 2005 as the [figure 4.3](#) and [4.4](#) illustrate. Improvements are more accentuated for girls than for boys and there are higher rates for girls in all ages while the higher rates for boys are not maintained from age 14 up 18 years of age.

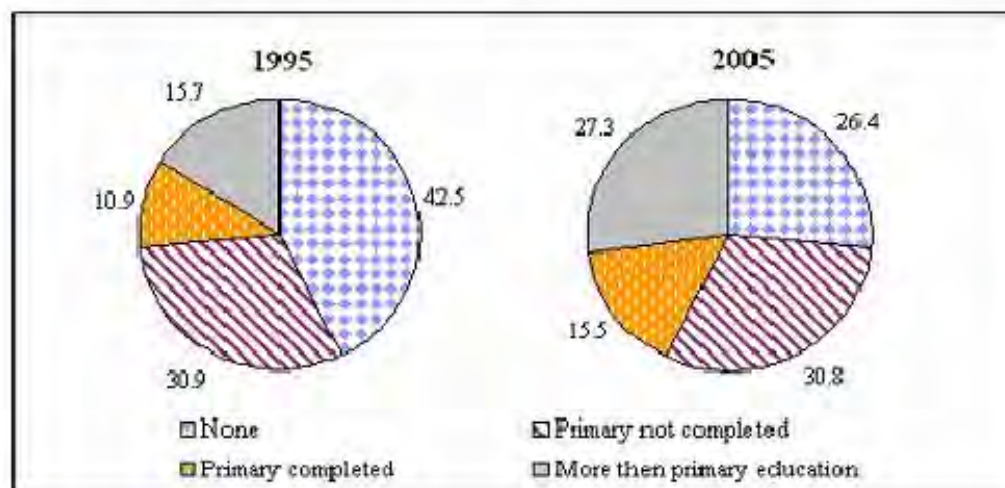
4.3. Highest Education Completed

Of all persons 6 years and over, 26 percent had not gotten any education, down from 43 percent in 1995. About 16 percent had completed primary school, 6 percent completed lower secondary and 5 percent upper secondary schools, respectively. Improvements in completed highest education tend to be small even with increasing enrolment rates for low ages. There are larger shares of persons completed school across all levels comparing 2005 with 1995 censuses (see table 4.5).

Table 4.5 shows data on school completion by province. The changes between 1995 and 2005 are further illustrated in [figures 4.5 \(primary school\)](#) and [4.6 \(lower secondary school\)](#). Interestingly, there are no changes in the share that have completed primary school in Vientiane Capital. In all other provinces there are higher completion rates and particular Xayaboury province seems to have been successful.

Table 4.6 presents completion rates by age group which also provides indications of dropouts in primary and secondary school. Of girls at ages 10-14 about 15 percent had completed primary school (about 7 percent in 1995) and for boys 14 percent (7 percent in 1995). Similarly in age group 15-19 the completion rate for girls was 10 percent and for boys 12 percent (7 percent in 1995 for both sexes). In age group 20-24 there was a rate of 12 percent for girls and 21 percent for boys (7 and 10 percent in 1995, respectively). It seems that girls, when it comes to completion, are better in primary school but boys tend to have better rate in secondary schools. Also when it comes to higher education men outnumber women with two times as many students with completion record. (Population Aged 6 years and Above and Highest Level of Education Completed)

Population Aged 6 years and Above and Highest Level of Education Completed



4.4. Literacy Rates

As already noted, literacy information from a census may not be as exact as in special surveys where tests can be made. However, the percentage of population aged 15 and above is very similar to recently made special surveys on literacy and also compared to the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS) in 2002.

73 persons out of 100 were literate according to the 2005 census. See table 4.7. In 1995 census the literacy rate was 60 percent. The literacy rate was highest in Vientiane Capital (92 percent) and lowest in Phongsaly (43 percent). The rate was also higher in urban areas (89 percent) and lowest (54 percent) were in rural areas without road.

Men were more literate than women, 83 compared to 63 percent, but the difference was larger in 1995 when men's and women's rate was 74 and 48 percent, respectively. Even across all ages men were more literate than women, see Table 4.8. There were also improvements across all age groups compared to 1995 but a more accentuated for women as figures 4.7 and 4.8 illustrate. These figures also show the impact education has on literacy, in lower ages the literacy rates are high and the ability to read and write declines with age.

The literacy rate differed considerably among the ethnic groups (see table 4.9). The rate was higher than national average for Lao ethnic group was 85 percent, Moy 84 percent, Ngouan 81 percent, Thainuea 80 percent, Tai 77 percent and Lue 76 percent. The rate was in particular low for Lahoo, Akha, Lolo and Tri. With the exception of Lao the literacy rate for the minorities were 55 percent. This is relatively low compared to Lao ethnic group, for female minorities 41 percent of which Lao females 79 percent, and for male minorities' 70 percent of which Lao male 91 percent. Thus women in particular are lacking behind men among minorities.

Chapter 5: Economic activity and labour force

The 2005 census measures, like the 1995 census, the activity status of the Lao population by the approach of "the usually active population", which means the main activity during the past 12 months. This approach was chosen instead of the "currently active population" usually referred to the status for the past week, because it represents a more stable measure of the economically active population and its structural distribution for economic analysis, projections and development planning. The activity status has been measured for the population 10 years and above. It thus includes children who have still not finished school because many children normally participate in agriculture or other types of economic activity.

The first question asked was:

What was your main activity the last twelve months?

Response alternatives:

- Paid Employee/Government (01)
- Paid Employee/Parastatal (02)
- Paid Employee/Private (03)
- Paid Employee/State Enterprise (04)
- Employer (05)
- Own Account Worker (06)
- Unpaid Family Worker (07)
- Unemployed (08)
- Student (09)
- Household Duties (10)
- Retired/Sick/Too Old (11)
- Other (12)

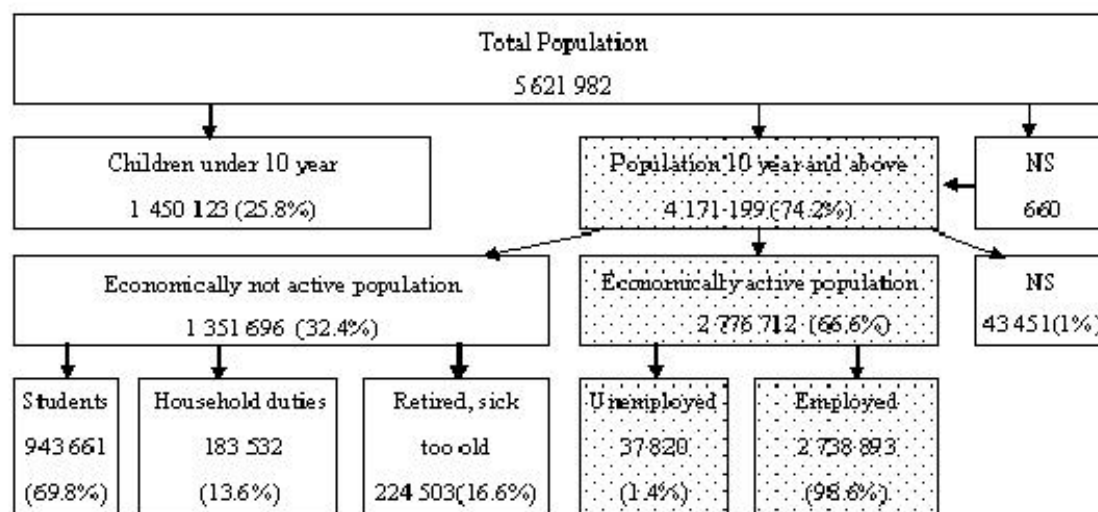
A person with response alternatives 01-08 is considered to be economically active, alternative 08 with the assumption that the person actually is looking for a job. Students (09) and persons whose main activity is household duties (10), retired/sickness/too old (11) are together with the other response alternatives considered to fall in the category "economically not active population".

The usually active population, or the labor force, comprises all persons who are 10 years and above and who are either employed or unemployed specified as 01 to 08 in the above list.

5.1. The Labor Force in 2005

What should be noted first is that the population 10 years and above has increased with just over 1 million people since 1995, while children under 10 are only slightly more (23 000). For the population 10 years and above it is the economically not active population that has become 400 000 more (44 percent increase), in particular more students and people with household duties as main activity. The economically active population 560 000 more (up with 25 percent).

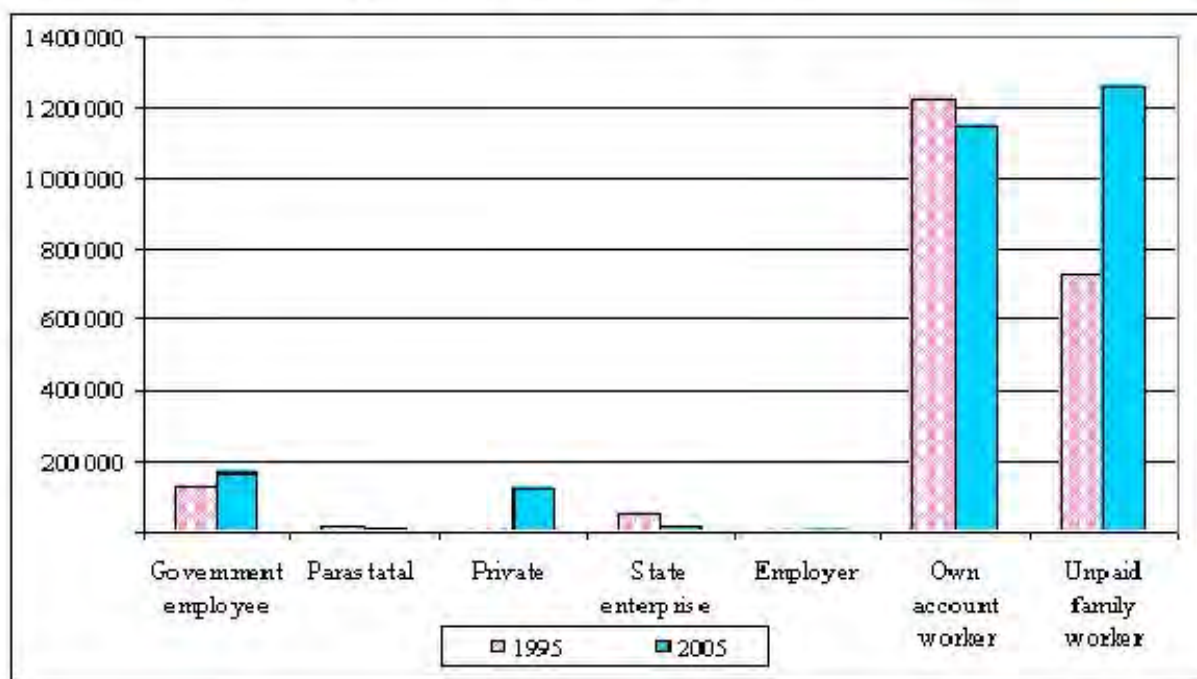
Figure 5.1. Distribution of the Population by Main Activity



As the figure above illustrates, the active population is divided into two categories, those who were **employed and those who were unemployed** but looking for work during the past 12 months. Among those employed the majority is (still) self-employed, own account workers mainly in agriculture and unpaid family workers. **The employed can be divided into**

seven categories with the numbers according to the following table.

Figure 5.2. Changes in Employment between 1995 and 2005



The changes since 1995 census is illustrated in figure 5.2. The dominance of self-employed is evident but the last 10 years has also seen an upswing in the private sector, although from a low level. Government staff has increased but employment in state enterprises and parastatals declined.

The following table presents the distribution of economically active and non-economically active population by sex, those who were 10-14 and 15 years and over in 2005. It can be seen that only few population aged 10 to 14 years were economically active and of those active in this group girls outnumber boys and the main activity is “unpaid family workers”.

5.2. Provincial comparisons

Participation in labor force varies considerably between provinces. In comparing with Savannakhet and Saravane province, Vientiane capital covers more of [proportion of number of economic activities employees](#). It can be noted that the definition for economically active population included own account workers and unpaid family workers, those covered large proportion. In rural areas without access to road 73 percent of the population 10 years and above are active, a rate that is down to 69 percent in rural areas with road and to 56 percent in urban areas.

5.3. Employment and Level of Education

Employment cross-tabulated with education level is presented in table 5.2.1. Higher education can obviously explain a higher rate of employment than lower levels of education. This difference is most clear for men where the activity rate lies at 86 percent compared to 74 percent for women. However, for people with basic education the figures are not conclusive, partly because the population 10 years and above encompasses large numbers of people at school.

5.4. Agriculture and Non- Agriculture Occupation

Table 5.7 presents the results from a question about the main occupation in the last 12 months divided into various types of farming and non-farm activities. Farming is the dominant sector of the economy in all provinces except Vientiane Capital where 65 percent of those economically active persons are occupied in non-farm activities. This is further

illustrated in [figure 5.4](#). Within agriculture only a small fraction has livestock farming as the main activity, while mixed farming (crop and livestock production) is more frequent in Xiengkhuang, Xaysomboon SR, Xayaboury and Luangprabang than in other provinces.

Chapter 6: Fertility

Fertility is one of three basic demographic main features provided by the Census, the others being mortality and migration. Fertility and related statistics are based on questions asked to women in their reproductive ages, 15 - 49 years of age. While the other census questions were answered by the heads of households, the questions on fertility were supposed to be answered directly by the women.

All the women in the age group 15 – 49 years of age were asked the following question:

Have you given any live birth?

- ◊ Yes
- ◊ No

For those who answered “yes”, there were some more questions asked:

How many children born alive to you

- ◊ Were with you during the census night (by sex of child)?
- ◊ Were elsewhere during the census night (by sex of child)?
- ◊ Have died?

These questions thus provide number of children ever born and the specification was made in order to minimize the risk that children away from home or dead would not be accounted for.

The section on fertility was completed by the question:

How old were you when you had your first live birth?

6.1. Number of women at reproductive ages

Women aged 15 – 49 years of age were asked about number of children ever born and surviving. As fertility has been high in the past the number of women that reaches reproductive ages continues to increase. [Figure 6.1](#) shows the changes between the 1995 and the 2005 censuses. The population projections (presented in chapter 9) demonstrate that the female population 15-49 years will continue to increase in absolute numbers, and as a share of the total female population. The share will go up from current 2005 level of 49.6 percent to 51.4 in 2010 and 52.6 percent in 2020.

6.2. Number of Children Ever Born and Living

Despite high fertility, almost 38 percent in 2005 (35 percent in 1995) of all women in reproductive ages have not given birth (table 6.1), and aHmong younger women (15-24) 70 percent were childless. For women aged 30 and above the proportion of childlessness was 9 percent.

Table 6.1 also shows that about 10 percent of women aged 15-19 have given birth to at least one child and this early childbearing has increased to 50 percent aHmong women aged 20-24. By the end of the reproductive period about 92 percent of all women have given birth to at least one child.

For reproductive women with children the most common [number of children](#) was 1 to 4 children, while those who had more than 4 children constituted about 17 percent of all reproductive women. Those women with 9 and more children were only 2 out of 100 compared with 4.5 in 1995.

The average children ever born (mean CEB) were 2.2 children for the whole country, varying from 0.1 children for women at age 15- 49 to 4.6 children at age 45-49. The mean CEB varies from 1.3 in Vientiane Capital to 2.9 in Huaphanh and Xaysomboon SR, and from 1.6 in urban areas to 2.7 in rural areas without road.

The following table provides data on mean CEB for the largest ethnic groups. Hmong people have the highest average number of children ever born. The Hmong population has also increased with 3.7 percent per year from 1995 to 2005.

The average number of children ever born to women aged 45-49 years was 4.6 (5.6 in 1995). As this age group marks the end of a woman's reproductive period this number reflects the fertility performance and is thus an indicator of completed fertility.

The following table is a summary of Table 6.3. Of 3 047 248 children ever born 2 746 397 were still living at the day of the census. Thus 10 percent of the children ever born had died.

6.3. Number of Children and Education

Table 6.1 shows the number of women by age group and number of children born alive by level of education. The most obvious impact seems to be that more educated women have fewer children. Less than 5 percent of the women with secondary school had more than 4 children compared to 28 percent of the women without schooling. Childbearing for women with education is also postponed to higher ages.

6.4. Age at First Live Birth

An important demographic indicator is age at first birth. Early start in childbearing may result in higher number of children ever born compared to later starts. Table 6.2 shows the frequencies of the age of woman when she has her first live birth. For the country as a whole the most common age is 20-24 years. The median age at first birth is 20 years, with small provincial variations, lowest in Huaphanh and Xaysomboon SR (19 years) and highest in Vientiane Capital and Champasack (21 years). In rural areas with access to road 15-19 years are more common. In rural areas with access to road 28 percent start childbearing in ages 15-19 compared to 31 percent in rural areas without access to road and 16 percent in urban areas. Very few women got a child before the age of 15, but it is more common in rural than in urban areas.

The median age at first birth also shows relatively small variations. For Lao and Akha it is 23 years, for Phouthay, Lue, Khmou, Makong 22 years and for Tai, Katang and Hmong it is 21 years.

The proportion of women aged 15-19 years who had given birth is 10 percent as Table 6.1 indicates. It is highest in Xaysomboon SR (18 percent), Huaphanh (15 percent) and Sekong (14 percent) and lowest in Vientiane Capital (4 percent), Champasack (6 percent) and Luangnamtha (9 percent). Among the major ethnic groups one can find high proportions for Hmong (21 percent), Makong (19 percent), Katang (16 percent) and Tai (12 percent) but lower than the national average for Lao (6 percent), Lue (8 percent), Akha and Phouthay (9 percent).

6.5. Adolescent fertility trends

The proportion of women who gave birth before the age of 20 years was 24 percent among women currently at age 45-49 and increased to 33 percent at age 30-34 and then declined to 31 percent among women currently at age 20-24. This trend of increasing adolescent fertility, observed e.g. in the 2000 reproductive health survey, does not seem to be so clear.

6.6. Estimated Number of Children

As mentioned before a question was asked to women aged 15-49 about the number of live births during the past 12 months. This question was not asked in 1995 census. However the number of children born was then obtained by adding the number of children aged 0 years on the day of the census and the number of children who died during the last twelve months at the age of 0 years. The results from the 2005 census are presented in Table 6.4.

About 114 000 children were reported to be born during the last twelve months. The sex ratio at birth was 104. The number of children is somewhat lower than in 1995. Both figures are believed to be too low due to underreporting. Demographic analysis made suggests that in 2005 the annual number of births was about 195 000 (see chapter 9 on population projections).

6.7. Fertility

Fertility has fallen during the intercensal period. [Figure 6.3](#) shows the enumerated total Lao population by age and sex in 2005 and suggests that some 10 years ago fertility began to drop markedly. A similar result was established in the analysis of the 1995 census.

It is apparent that at the national level as well as at provincial levels there must have been a marked fertility transition during the past 10 years or so. As one would expect, the transition seems to begin in Vientiane Capital. Here the fertility drop began some 20 or 25 years ago. Roughly speaking, there is a 10-year time lag between onsets of fertility declines in urban and rural areas.

Estimated age-specific fertility rates for Lao PDR are shown in [figure 6.4](#). These estimates are based partly on reported live births during the 12 months preceding the census, partly on the census age-distribution. The age-specific rate would give a total fertility rate of 4.5. The mean age of the fertility schedule is 28 years. This, roughly speaking, is also the mean age at childbearing.

An age-specific rate is calculated as the number of births in a year to mothers of a specific age (usually 5-year age group) per woman of the same age.

The table below summarizes the demographic estimates on fertility since 1995 with estimates up to 2020.

Any estimate of TFR is uncertain. In the 1995 census report TFR was estimated at 5.6 (alternatively 5.4). However, when reconciling the two censuses it seems that 5.5 for 1995 are too high. This estimate is now downgraded to 5.0. The estimated fertility trend from 1995 to 2005 is well in line with other estimates. The Reproductive Health Survey thus estimated a rate of 4.9 for year 2000.

6.8. Fertility at Provincial Level

As expected there are large differences between provinces. The estimates are based on the current reproductive tempo and quantum of women aged 20-29 years. This approach is often taken in indirect estimation of fertility. These estimates have been upgraded so that they are in agreement with the previously given estimate of TFR for Lao PDR in 2005, namely 4.5. The corresponding estimate for Lao PDR based on women aged 20-29 was 4.2. The discrepancy between the two estimates is reasonably small (7 percent). A few comments are in place. Indirect estimation methods (with few exceptions) build on the assumption that variables are stationary.

In the case of fertility this means that women below age 30, say, all share the same fertility schedule. Such an assumption will always stand invalidated by nature. Hence, whichever method is chosen imprecision is necessarily imputed. Moreover, the reported number of children ever born is almost always affected by some underreporting. It is reasonable, then, to upgrade the provincial original estimates by a factor of 1.07 to reflect partly adjustment for underreporting, partly to bring it into balance with the previously given [estimate \(TFR = 4.5\)](#). The results are presented in the following table.

It will be noted that there are considerable differences between provinces. Vientiane Capital is close to the level of reproduction whereas Huaphanh and Xaysomboon SR have TFR levels of 6.4 (a very high level of reproduction). The table below gives the estimates together with number of children ever born.

Chapter 7: Mortality

The mortality level is one of the main health indicators in a country. In the Lao Census 2005 there was one direct question and sub-questions asked about deaths in the household during the last twelve months. This chapter is based on these questions and on the demographic analysis that has been made.

The questions about mortality were:

- Did any deaths occur in the household during the last 12 months?

With a “yes” answer the followed questions were:

- **Was the deceased a female or male?**

- **How old was the deceased?**

Furthermore for women 15-49 years of age and for deaths other than in accidents:

- **Did she die while pregnant, while giving birth or within 42 days after giving birth?**

7.1. Estimated mortality

The demographic analysis instead tells that the number of deaths should be around 55 000 per year making the estimate in agreement with estimates of infant mortality and life expectancy.

The estimate of **crude death rate (CDR)** number of deaths per 1000 persons by province is illustrated in [the figure 7.1](#). The average for the country is 9.8 per 1000 persons, lowest in Vientiane Capital (6.2 per 1000 person), Vientiane Province (7.7 per 1000 person and Xayaboury (7.8) and highest in Oudomxay (14.9) Attapeu (14.4 per 1000 person) and Sekong (14.4 per 1000 person).

7.2. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR)

Infant mortality rate is the number of newborn children who die during the first year of life per 1000 live birth. In recent years there has been a drop in infant and child mortality. While at the time of the census in 1995 infant mortality was 104 per 1000 live births, in 2005 it was about 70 per 1000 live births. These estimates derive from reported children ever born and surviving children. Under- 5 mortality rate (the probability of dying between birth and the age of 5 was estimated at 97.6 per 1 000 live births. As a comparison the 2000 reproductive health survey estimated IMR to 82.2 and U5MR to 106.9.

The estimated infant mortality by province in 2005 is shown in figure 7.3 and in the table together with life expectancies. IMR varies a great deal between provinces, with the lowest rate in Vientiane Capital (18) and highest in Sekong (122). Relative levels of mortality are indicated by index R. It will be seen, for example, that Vientiane Capital has 26 percent of the mortality of Lao PDR. Sekong has 183 percent higher mortality than the average for the country.

7.3. Life expectancies

The estimated life expectancies (LE) for females and males for the country and by provinces are shown in the table at next page. In 2005 the LE-estimate was 63 years for women and 59 years for men. In the 1995 census the corresponding estimates were 52 years for women and 50 years for men.

The only possibility of estimating life expectancies is to take advantage of the relationship between infant mortality and the life expectancy at birth. Estimation of this nature involves a degree of uncertainty. Likely the estimated life expectancies derived from estimates of infant mortality are of precision ± 2.5 years².

7.4. Maternal Mortality

The following table demonstrates estimation of maternal mortality. From the 2005 population census the estimated maternal mortality per 100 000 births was 405. This is an approximate estimate. As a comparison it can be mentioned that the 2000 Reproductive health survey estimated a ratio of 530. The estimated figure for 2005 indicated that maternal mortality has slightly decreased. Maternal mortality higher than 400 per 100 000 births was found more among women aged between 15-39 years, it even was higher among women aged between 30-39 years.

7.5. Summary of mortality estimates

As mortality rates have declined and continue to decline. Life expectancy (LE) has increased by 10 years during the intercensal period. It is estimated to increase another 7 years up to 2015 both for men and women. During the same period infant mortality rate (IMR) and under 5 mortality rate (U5MR) are expected to decrease about 40 percent.

Chapter 8: Housing characteristics

The 2005 census, like the 1995 census, included a large part regarding housing conditions of the population. This part contains housing tenure, electricity, size of living area, access to water, main source of energy for cooking and type of toilet facilities. Results are presented in Tables 8.1 to 8.7. They refer to private households.

8.1. Housing

Tenure status refers to the arrangements under which the household occupies its living quarters and the nature of its right to be there (see table 8.1). As an average for the whole country 96 percent of the households own their own houses/dwelling units. Only on urban areas and in particular in Vientiane Capital are there any significant number of other arrangements such as tenant and tied accommodation, in urban areas about 6 percent and in Vientiane Capital about 9 percent. In rural areas owner-occupiers are close to 100 percent. The tenure arrangements are basically the same as in the 1995 census.

Occupancy status definitions used

Response alternatives:

- ◊ Owner: An owner is one who owns the house or is in a process of buying it
- ◊ Tenant: A tenant rents and occupies the whole dwelling unit and generally pays electricity and water charges to urban authorities
- ◊ Lodger: A lodger rents part of a dwelling unit which is normally occupied by the owner
- ◊ Tied accommodation: A person living in tied accommodation occupies it by virtue of his or her job. The accommodation belongs to the employer and is made available as part of terms of employment.
- ◊ Other: Includes those who stay free in a dwelling unit but constituting a separate household

8.2 House construction

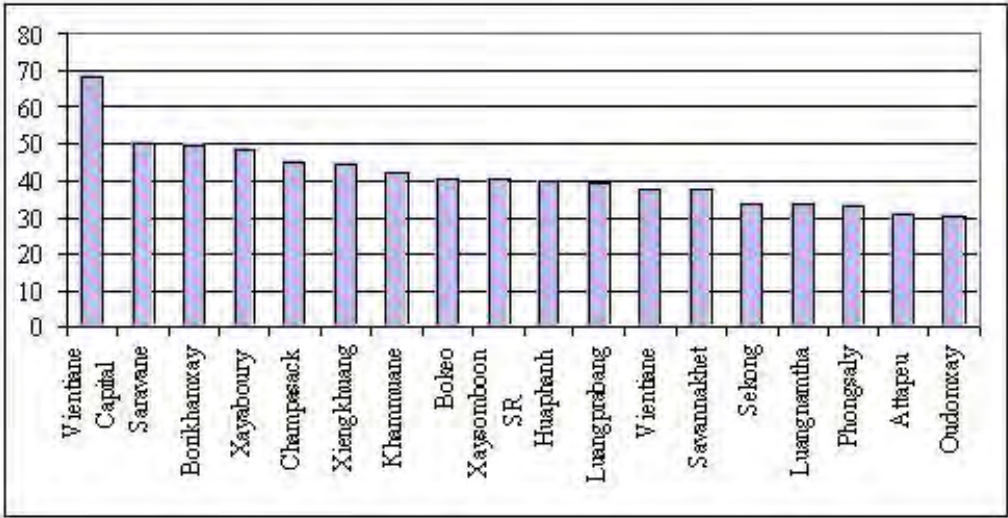
Tables 8.2.1 and 8.2.3 include questions about the construction quality of the house on type of building materials used for roof, wall and floor. Basically four types of houses can be identified referring to the structure of materials:

- ◊ Concrete/brick houses,
- ◊ Wooden houses,
- ◊ Concrete/wooden houses and
- ◊ Semi-permanent houses with structures of bamboo, plywood and grass

The first three types of house are defined as permanence houses and the fourth type is defined as temporary house. About 10 percent of the private households live in [semi-permanent houses](#) where floor wall and roof are made of bamboo or grass (grass only on roof). The remaining households live in permanent houses (either of floor, wall or roof not made of bamboo or grass). The situation by province is illustrated in the following figure.

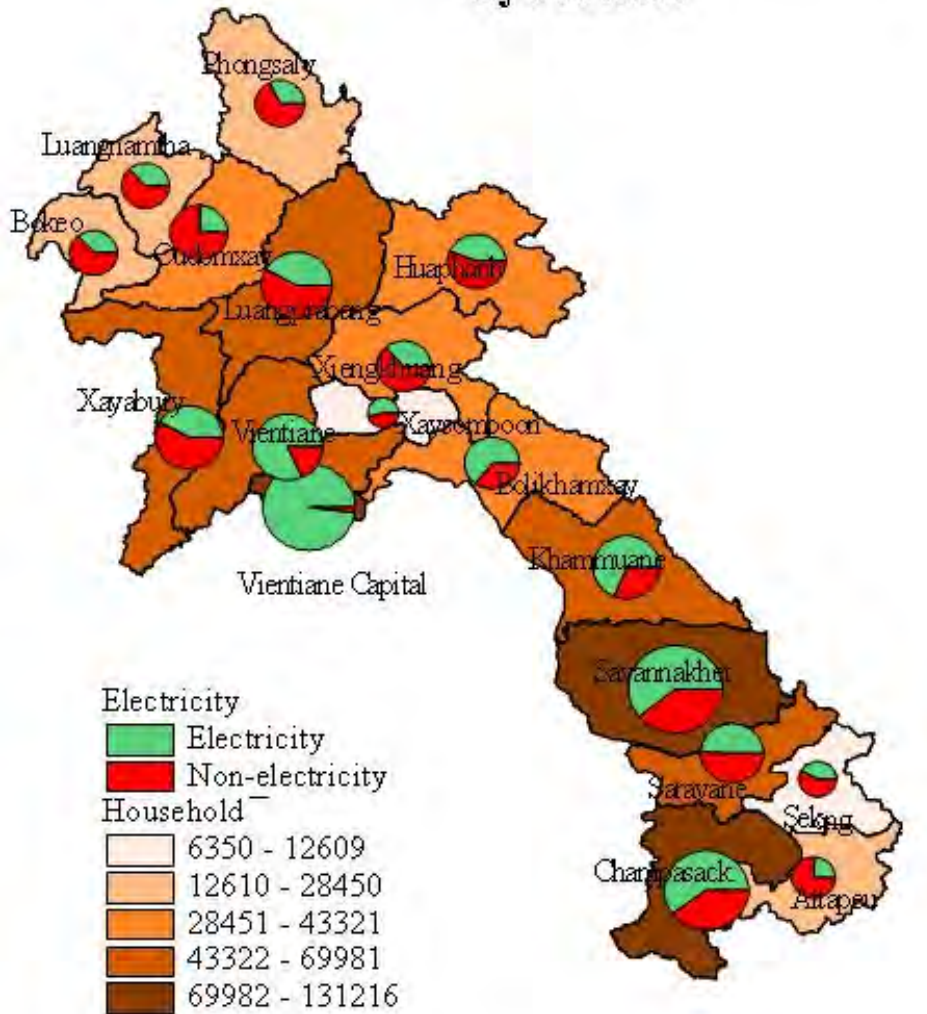
The average actual living area was 44 square meters with variation from 68 square meters in Vientiane Capital to 31 square meter in Attapeu and Oudomxay (see figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2. Average Size of Living Area (square meters)



8.3 Use of Electricity

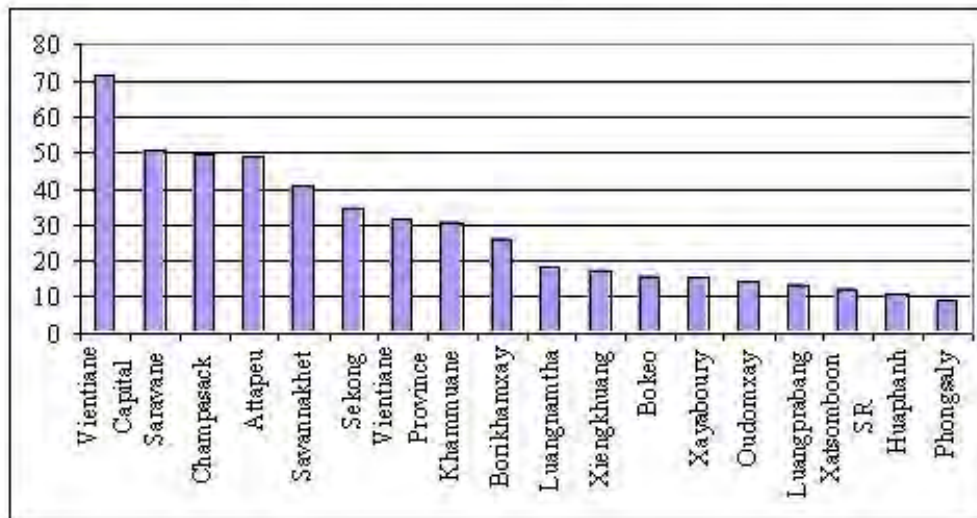
Number of household using electricity By Province



Almost 50 percent of the private households have access to electricity through the national grid and another 10 percent through own generator or car battery. Thus about 40 percent of the households have no access to any electricity supply. In the 1995 census almost 75 percent had no access to electricity at all. Large achievements have thus been made during the past 10 years. Urban areas are by far better off compared to rural areas. In urban areas 90 percent had access to electricity from the public net, while 43 and 11 percent have similar access in rural areas with and without road, respectively. Among provinces accessibility vary from 95 percent in Vientiane Capital to 12 percent in Phongsaly. However, improvements have been made in all provinces.

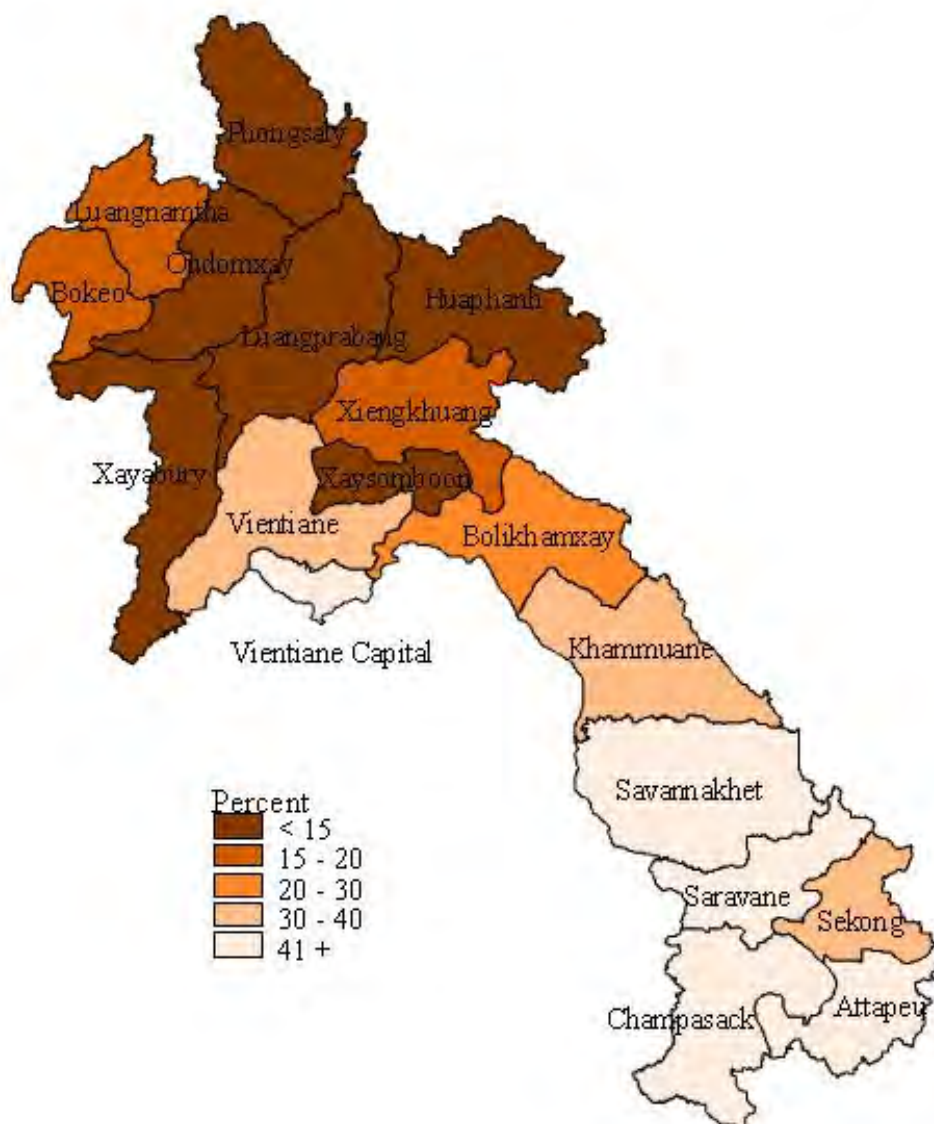
8.3 Water for Dringking and Cooking

Figure 8.3. Percent of Private Households with Access to Safe Water



About 35 percent of all private households had access to safe water (water from pipes or protected well/boreholes). During the last decade the use of safe water was improved which obviously showed the percentages of household using safe water were more than double. The corresponding share in 1995 was 15 percent. There are (still) large differences between regions and provinces. Thus 67 percent of urban households had safe water compared to 27 and 13 percent in rural areas with and without road, respectively.

Percent of Private Households with Access to Safe Water



Almost 53 percent of the households had access to water on the premises and 40 percent fetched water less than 500 meters from the house. Accessibility of water on the premises has almost doubled since 1995.

8.5 Main Source of Energy for Cooking

Around 80 percent of the households use wood as the main source for cooking, 15 percent use charcoal and 1 percent use electricity and gas, respectively. The change since 1995 is that charcoal has become more common at the expense of wood but use of electricity is even less used than in 1995. Changes in relative prices of energy sources has probably hold back uses of electricity in spite of the fact that many more households have access to electricity compared to 1995. In Vientiane Capital the percentage of households that use of electricity for cooking has declined from 14 to 7 percent.

8.6 Type of Toilet

Household have Toilet by Province

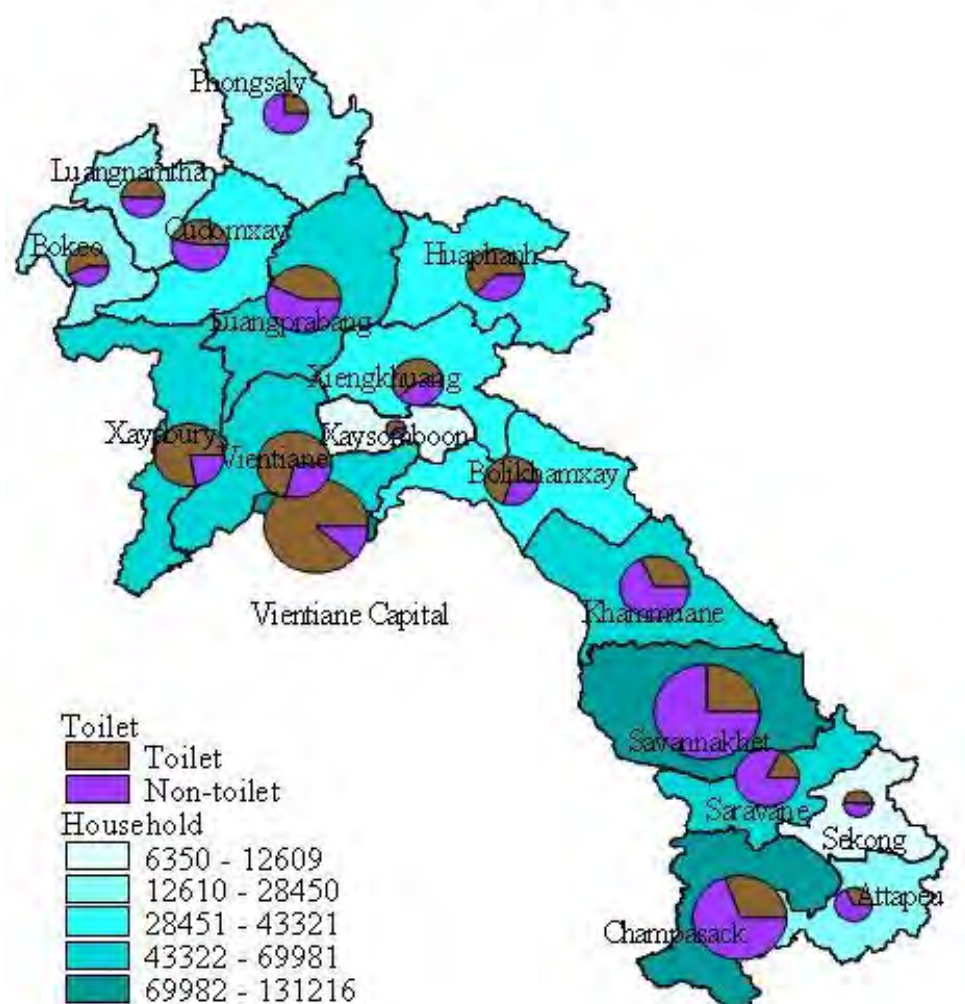


Table 8.7 shows households' uses of toilet. Almost half of the households did not make use of any toilets. In rural areas the proportion of households that uses proper toilet was 27 percent compared to 76 percent in urban areas.

As for the different types of toilet used, "normal" toilets (water toilet without flush) were most common, used by 38.5 percent of the households. Modern toilets are seldom used, not even in Vientiane Capital which was only 9.2 percent.

Chapter 9: Population projections

Population projections are made in order to provide future estimates of the population size and structure to planners, policy makers and researchers. Such projections are based on past trends of fertility, mortality and migration as well as on assumptions on how these factors develop in the future. The size and structure of the projected population will depend on these assumptions.

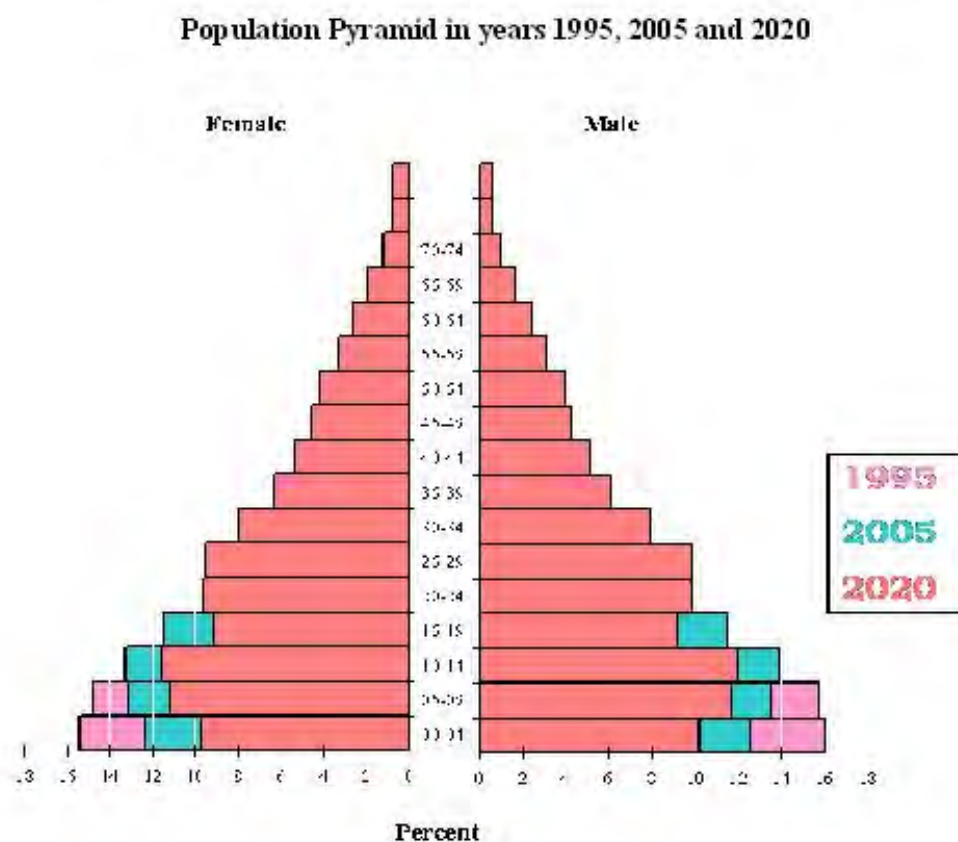
The population projections in this report cover the period of 2006-2020. There are two projections made: the first one is what will happen if the 2005 levels of fertility and mortality prevail for the projection period (2006-2020) which means levels of fertility and mortality are the same as 1995, and the second one is based on a continued decline in fertility and mortality.

9.1. Population Projection in the 1995 Census

The population in the 1995 census was projected up to 2020 also in two alternatives. One assumed that the 1995 fertility and mortality levels would prevail, another assumed declines in fertility and mortality. The first projections estimated a population of 5,916 thousand people in 2005 and the second (more realistic) projection a population of 5,763 thousand people in 2005. Neither of the projections took into account of any negative migration abroad, but assumed that migration, as situation at that time indicated, would be negligible. With that clarification the first projections made from the 1995 census look pretty accurate.

9.2. Annual Estimated Populations 1995 – 2005

With knowledge about the most recent estimates of fertility and mortality and net-migration annually projected populations during the intercensal period have been calculated and the results are given in the table below. The demographic characteristics providing this estimate are the followings:



- ◊ Total fertility rate (TFR) declined from 5.0 in 1995 (and estimated from the 1995 census) to 4.5 in 2005
- ◊ The gross reproduction rate (GRR), the number of daughters a women gives birth to, reduced from 2.4 to 2.2
- ◊ The net reproduction rate (NRR), the number of daughters a woman leaves behind while accounting for the possibility of her death before the end of her reproductive period, unchanged at 1.9
- ◊ A negative net-migration of about 15 000 persons per year, evenly divided between men and women
- ◊ Life expectancies at birth increased from 51.4 years for males in 1995 to 59.1 years and for women from 55.0 to 63.0 years
- ◊ Crude birth rate (CBR) per 1000 fell from 36.6 in 1995 to 34.3 in 2005
- ◊ Crude death rate (CDR) per 1000 fell from 13.6 in 1995 to 9.6 in 2005

Under these circumstances the theoretical population would grow from 4 575 million in 1995 to 5 646 in 2005 as the table 9.1 indicates. The estimated population is thus only marginally higher than the enumerated population in 2005 – the difference is only about 20 000 persons.

The intercensal projections also show that the annual number of births and deaths are higher than the enumerated figures. The annual number of births was thus estimated at 167 000 in 1995 and at 193 800, while the enumeration stops

at 109 000 in 1995 and 195 000 in 2005. Similar under-enumeration can be spotted for number of deaths.

It should be noted that even though fertility was declining for the intercensal period, nevertheless the yearly number of births is likely to increase due to structural effects. Increasingly large cohorts of women enter reproductive ages and therefore more children are born even though TFR declines. As it can be seen in table 9.1 Women in reproductive ages are taken an increasingly higher share of the population or from 45.6 percent in 1995 to 49.1 percent in 2005.

The table on intercensal estimated population shows that the actual population growth for 2005 is estimated at 2.1 percent, but the natural population growth (real net increase, RNI), that is, crude birth rate minus crude death rate is about 2.5 percent. Furthermore, there seems to be no reduction in the natural growth rate during the intercensal period. The fact that actual growth rate is lower is due to negative net-migration, i.e. people has emigrated in greater numbers than those who has immigrated.

9.3. Population Projections 2005-2020

Based on the enumerated population in the 2005 population census projections have been made up to 2020. The main projection is presented in Table 9.2 and the projection shows what would happen assuming a reasonable decline in fertility and mortality. The assumptions behind the projection are as depicted in the following table. In summary the assumptions are:

- ◊ TFR declines from 4.5 in 2005 to 2.1 in 2020
- ◊ Life expectancies for males and females increase from 59 and 63 in 2005 to 70 and 74 years in 2020, respectively.
- ◊ Infant mortality decreases from 70 per 1000 in 2005 to 34.2 per 1000 in 2020
- ◊ Net migration is assumed to increase from -15 000 persons per year to -20 000 persons in 2020
- ◊ The annual number of births would decrease from about 190 000 in 2005 to about 136 000 in 2020
- ◊ The crude birth rate decreases from about 34 per 1000 in 2005 to about 19 per 1000 in 2020

As the above table demonstrates the natural growth rate of the population will remain at 2.4 percent the next years but drop to 2.2 percent in 2010 and to 1.9 percent in 2015 and to 1.4 percent in 2020. With a continued and somewhat increased negative net immigration the actual growth rate will drop from current 2.5 percent down to 1.1 percent in 2020. The population size in 2020 would with these assumptions reach 7,260 thousand persons. With constant 2005 mortality, fertility and net-migration the population would instead reach 7,990 thousand by 2020, more than 730 thousand more compared to the more realistic projection with falling fertility and mortality.

The age structure of the 2020 projected population is also shown in a [population pyramid](#). The population in working ages will slowly increase as percentage of total population, from 57 percent in 2005 to 59 and 61 percent in 2010 and 2020, respectively.

As noted, the projection for 2020 assumes that in this year TFR will reach the reproductive level of about 2.1. (see table 9.2). In this respect it must be noted that fertility trends have pointed downwards in almost all countries since the 1970s. Especially in recent years it has become apparent that fertility is likely to remain below replacement level in many countries during the next decades. The population aged 65+ in Lao PDR is likely to remain very low during the next decades.

It might not be happening in the Lao PDR because fertility is likely to remain well above the reproductive level. However, because fertility now is falling and possibly quite rapidly, it is important that some thought is given to the future age-distribution of the population. This can be done by means of population projections.

Table 9.3 shows a hypothetical projection based on demographic estimates for 2005. In this projection the population estimate for 2020 is about 7.9 million. The corresponding population estimate in table 9.2 is 7.3 million. Projections show rounded figures and are subject to revision when demographic estimates have been finalized.