



With population characteristics and processes — which are both the drivers and results of social and economic development processes and outcomes — a good understanding of a country's population dynamics is imperative in order to provide the basis for informed decision-making, policy development and planning.

While population and housing censuses in most countries provide the backbone of this information, the provision of a 'snapshot' every five to ten years is insufficient for informing policy and allowing a regular monitoring of development progress.

Regular household (HH) surveys, such as the 2015 Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey (SIDHS), address this data and information gap by providing high quality, up-to-date statistics and information in their own right, and providing the basis for calculating important development indicators.

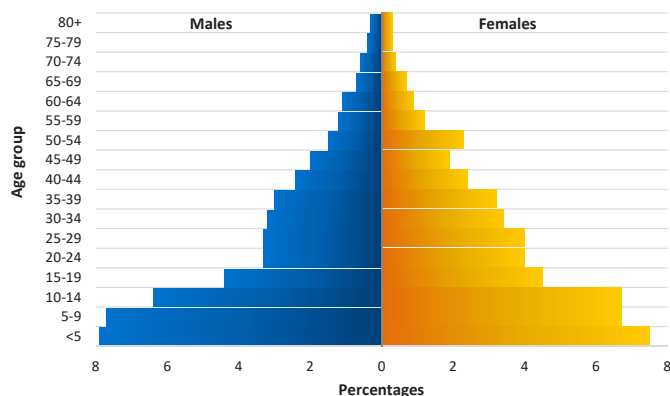
The 2015 SIDHS provided more than 100 such indicators, covering many development features of relevance to both national and international development agencies, and conventions such as the Sustainable Development Goals, International Conference on Population and Development, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, United Nations General Assembly Special Session, and United Nations Children's Fund, to name but a few that are included in this development snapshot.

## Solomon Islands population

A census is held in Solomon Islands every 10 years, and the most recent census in 2009 recorded a total population of 515,870.

Solomon Islands has a youthful population, with about 43% of the population younger than 15 years of age. Older age groups are very small in comparison, as can be seen in the population pyramid below. This type of age structure has a built-in momentum for the growth of the country's population. When the young population eventually reaches reproductive age, the result will be a high population growth rate for many more years to come.

Fig. 1: Percent distribution of de facto household population by age and sex, 2015 SIDHS

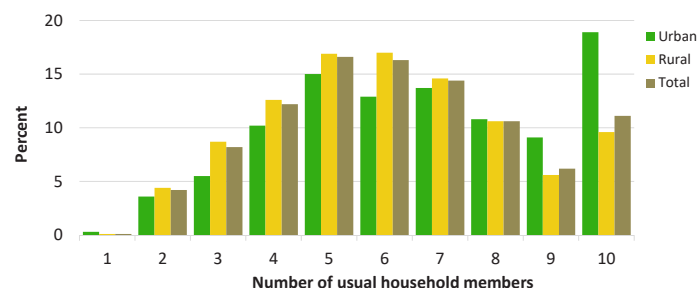


## Household composition

The average HH comprises 5.3 people, which is the same as what was recorded in the 2006–2007 SIDHS, and similar to what was reported in the 2009 census (5.5 people/HH). Urban HHs

(6.1 people/HH), on average, have one more member than rural HHs (5.2). In urban areas, about 19% of HHs have nine or more members compared with 9.6% for rural HHs, indicating a need for housing in urban areas. Large HH size is not just a reflection of a growing population but is also indicative of cultural practices and the availability of services within the country

Fig. 2: Household composition – number of usual members, 2015 SIDHS



## Children's living arrangement and orphanhood

About 17% of children less than 18 years of age do not live with their biological parents, and this percentage increases with the age of the child. About 31% of all HHs have an orphan or foster child staying there.

## Number of rooms for sleeping

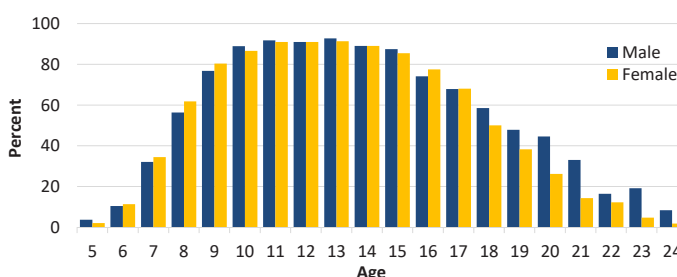
Large HH size and limited land area make for dense living conditions, with 61% of all HHs using only one or two rooms for sleeping.

In addition to providing basic population information, the 2015 SIDHS also yields some key socioeconomic background characteristics that can help to explain similarities and contrasts in key demographic and health outcomes. Education (i.e. levels of educational attainment) and economic well-being (expressed in wealth quintiles) are important characteristics, with access to safe water and sanitation being of critical importance to the physical well-being of the population, particularly infants and young children.

## Education

By age 8 or 9 years, the majority of Solomon Islands children attend school. Starting at age 14, the attendance rate declines noticeably for all children.

Fig. 3: Age-specific attendance rates of the de facto population of children ages 5 to 24 years, 2015 SIDHS



Overall, primary school attendance is not universal, as reflected in a net attendance rate of 66%. In urban areas, 72% of children aged 6–12 years attend primary school compared with 65% in rural areas (the lowest percentage, 62%, occurs in Malaita).



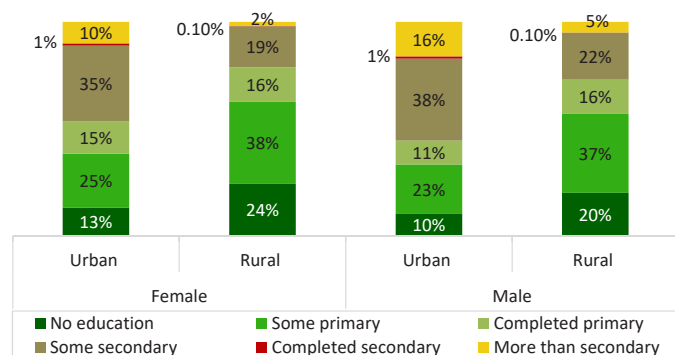
Results of the 2015 SIDHS indicate that most children start school later than age 6. Primary school is provided free in Solomon Islands, and it is expected that all children aged 8 and 9 attended primary school during the 2015 school year.

Education attainment of the de facto Solomon Islands population shows that about 16% of women and 15% of men have completed primary education. Very few women, (4%) and men (7%) have attained more than secondary education.

The median number of years of schooling is higher for males than females (4 and 5 years respectively) and is higher in urban areas than rural areas.

Data also shows that 39% of women and 45% of men aged 15–49 achieved some secondary while only 6% of women and 10% of men have completed more than secondary.

Fig. 4: Educational attainment of the de facto Solomon Islands household population by sex and by region, 2015 SIDHS

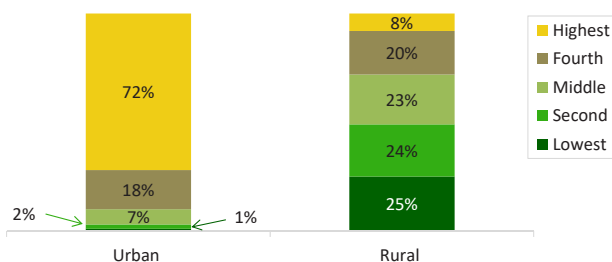


### Economic well-being

Information on HH assets allows the calculation of a wealth index, which provides a useful proxy measure that describes the long-term standard of living of a HH. It is not, however, an absolute measure that indicates whether a HH suffers hardship or lives in poverty. What it can indicate is that a person living in a HH in the second highest wealth quintile has a better socioeconomic status than someone in a lower wealth quintile HH.

The population distribution across five equally sized wealth quintiles indicates a rather uneven distribution of wealth in Solomon Islands, with 81% of the population in Honiara in the highest wealth quintile.

Fig. 5: Population distribution by household wealth quintile, 2015 SIDHS

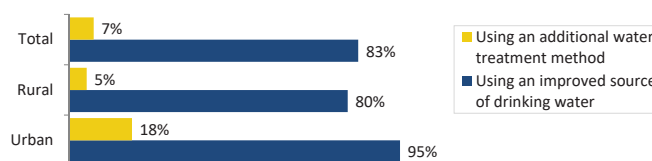


### Access to safe water and sanitation

Poor sanitation coupled with unsafe water sources increases the risk of waterborne diseases and illnesses. HHs without proper

toilet facilities are more exposed to the risk of diseases such as dysentery, diarrhoea, and typhoid fever than those with improved sanitation facilities.

Fig. 6: Household access to improved drinking water, 2015 SIDHS

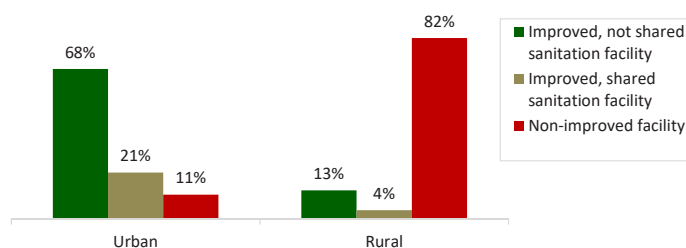


In urban areas, most HHs (95%) have access to an improved water source, while 80% of HHs have access to an improved water source in rural areas. Water can be contaminated at collection sites, during storage, or during transportation, and can require additional treatment. Very few HHs use additional treatment methods (e.g. boiling the water) to ensure that their water is safe to drink.

### Sanitation facilities

About 30% of all HHs across the country have access to improved non-shared and shared sanitation facilities. Most HHs in urban areas (68%) have access to an improved non-shared sanitation facility. The lack of sanitation facilities is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where 82% of HHs do not have access to improved sanitation facilities.

Fig. 7: Types of household sanitation facilities in Solomon Islands by urban and rural areas, 2015 SIDHS



### Policy note

Solomon Islands has a broad base population as shown in the population pyramid, an early indication of continued high births that translates into high population growth. This population pattern is common in other neighbouring countries such as Vanuatu and Fiji. A young and youthful population means continued and increasing pressure on the government to provide education and employment opportunities for the country's growing young population.

In terms of economic well-being, the results of the 2015 SIDHS show an uneven distribution of wealth in Solomon Islands, with 81% of the population in Honiara being in the highest wealth quintile compared with the population of other regions.

Although education is free in Solomon islands, it is worth noting that most children attend school later than the official age of schooling, and by age 14 the attendance rate declines noticeably among all children. Furthermore, while most people in Solomon Islands have completed some secondary education, very few achieved more than a secondary education.

\*For more detailed information on population, see chapters 2 and 3 in the 2015 SIDHS report.