

DEMOGRAPHIC & SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGES IN SABAH REPORT

OVERVIEW & KEY FINDINGS



DEMOGRAPHIC & SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGES IN SABAH REPORT - OVERVIEW:

In support of Sabah Economic Planning Unit's objective to ensure that Sabah's women and girls are an essential part of the state's socioeconomic development – the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Malaysia together with the Population Studies Unit, University of Malaya and Universiti Malaysia Sabah embarked on this landmark study – with the objective of establishing key metrics that outline tangible benchmarks, to serve as indicators for Gender Equity in Sabah's developmental journey towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs').

Being the first of such robust reports, the study seeks to develop an initial database that could support a thorough benchmark and review of gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights indicators, as key enablers when it comes to advancing socioeconomic and sustainable development of women and girls in Sabah. It is hoped that the findings of the study will provide policy and programme recommendations to further support the empowerment of women and girls in Sabah, optimising the state's socioeconomic development towards achieving the 2030 SDGs'.

Population Dynamics:

Sabah's population dynamics reveal distinct trends and challenges that impact the development of the state. Between 1970 and 2020, Sabah's population increased more than six-fold, rising from 635.4 thousand to an estimated 3.9 million, while Malaysia's population increased about three-fold from 10.5 million to 32.6 million.

However, since 2000, Sabah's population growth rate dropped to 0.1% per annum, lower than Malaysia's national average of 0.4%. In 2018, Sabah recorded a total fertility rate of 1.4, which was the second lowest in the country after Pulau Pinang (1.3).

Sabah has experienced significant changes in its population age-sex structure. The state has undergone an expanding working-age population (from 59.2% to 73% for ages 15-64), along with a growing older population (from 2.3% to 3.3% for ages 65 and above), and a decline in the proportion of young people (from 38.4% to 23.7%).

These demographic shifts necessitate proactive planning and strategic policies aimed at enhancing human capital, which then leads to the growth and prosperity of the state.

Education, Youth & Healthcare:

Development planning is critical for education and healthcare in view of the demographic change. In 2018, the enrolment rate in secondary education was 88% for males and 94% for females. These figures are projected to decline further between 2020-2040.

When it comes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (ensuring that all youth and a significant number of adults achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030) – Sabah needs proactive to address the current falling literacy rate. The 2019 statistics highlighted that the literacy rate amongst Sabahan youths aged 15-24 years was the lowest across Malaysia due to poor logistics and a lack of modern infrastructure. Hence, adequate resource allocation is essential to ensure quality education and to address the disparities in education access.

Sabahan youth constitute 14% of the total youth population in Malaysia. The youth sector in Sabah has gained some notable successes that are unique to Sabah. Several Youth development initiatives such as the Sabah Youth Index 2015 and Sabah Youth Policy have been implemented, indicating the state's commitment to empowering youth. Creating a conducive environment for youth empowerment by ensuring better coordination and partnerships among stakeholders is crucial in fulfilling the youth's potential

For healthcare, the increasing population and the anticipated growth in the proportion of older individuals, suggest that there will be a greater demand for health resources and facilities in Sabah in the future. Development planning will provide directions to policymakers and relevant authorities in determining the resources, facilities, and budgetary requirements.

Gender Disparities – Female Labour Force Participation Rate:

The issue of gender disparities in labour force participation remains. In Sabah, only 49.1% of married women participate in the workforce, compared to a significantly higher figure of 96.8% for married men. However, the report also showed that female labour force participation rate increased with higher educational attainment.

The study highlights the importance of educational attainment in improving female employability, thereby narrowing the gender gap in labour force participation. In addition, various efforts could be implemented to increase female labour force participation, including extending maternity leave in the private sector, providing flexible working arrangements, and improving female human capital through job training and lifelong learning.

Child Marriage, Family Planning and Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights:

The prevalence of child marriage is higher among rural women in Sabah and decreased with higher educational attainment is declining. However, challenges also remain in family planning, with a higher unmet need for contraception, particularly amongst women with lower educational levels, older women, and women of Kadazan/Dusun ethnicity.

Like in other parts of Malaysia, there is also a low level of knowledge in sexual and reproductive health, family planning among youth. Sabah youth had the lowest family planning knowledge, with only 37.7% having heard about it.

Therefore, promoting sexual and reproductive health, family planning knowledge and care practice, especially among young people, is crucial. Strengthening implementation of the National Reproductive Health Education and Social Education (PEKERTI) Policy and Action Plan that was adopted in 2012 as part of the strategies to ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being of all ages, in line with Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, is key.

In addition, fostering public-private partnerships and leveraging innovative approaches, such as internet and social media outreach could be useful for improving maternal and child health and women's reproductive rights.

Conclusion:

This report showed that Sabah's population and demographic dynamics are undergoing significant shifts, offering both opportunities and challenges for development. Effective policies and resource allocation are crucial to harnessing the benefits of a changing population demographic, promoting gender equality, enhancing education and healthcare services, and empowering the youth, ultimately contributing to the state's socioeconomic development and well-being.

Demographic & Socioeconomic Changes in Sabah –Key Findings:

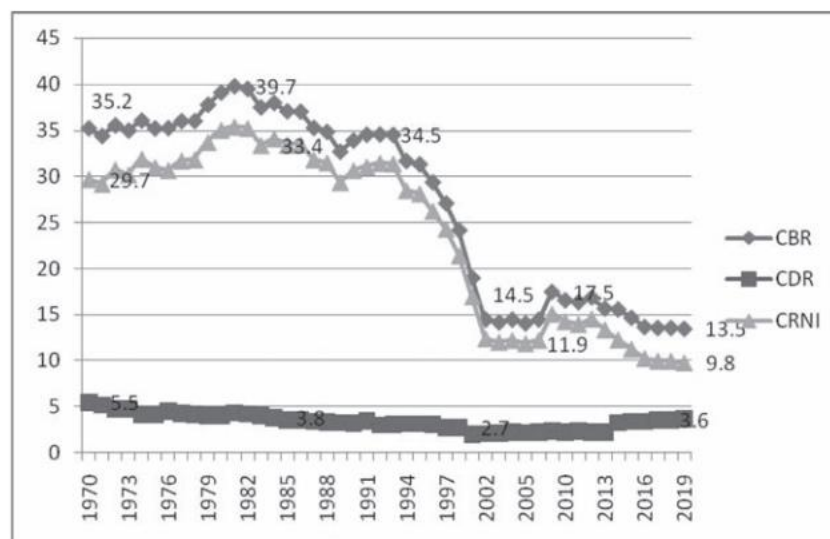
A. Population Growth and Distribution

- Between 1970 and 2020, Malaysia's population increased more than three-fold from 10.5 million to 32.6 million. Sabah's population increased more than 6-fold from 635.4 thousand to an estimated 3.9 million during the same period¹.
- Sabah was the only state with a substantial increase in the rural population, growing at 2.6% per annum, followed by Pahang and Kelantan, at 1.5% and 1.1%, respectively.

B. The Demographic Dynamics in Sabah

- Sabah's population growth had stagnated in 2019 – 2020, while the crude rate of annual increase was much higher, at about 1%. The stagnation of population growth in 2019 – 2020 is due to the negative growth of the non-citizen population since 2018.

Figure 1



Sources: DOSM (2001c, 2015a, 2018, 2020b). Vital Statistics reports.

¹ Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) based on population censuses, sample surveys, and the vital registration system

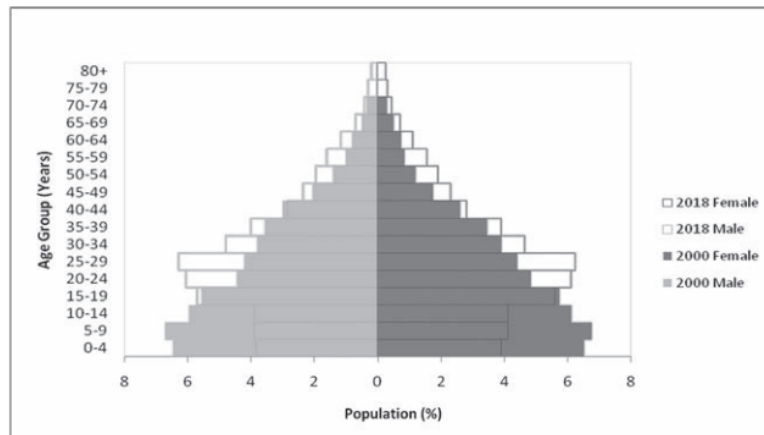
- The five most populous districts in 2019 were Kota Kinabalu (572,500, or 14.4% of the state population), Tawau (514,000, 12.9%), Sandakan (510,600, 12.8%), Lahad Datu (295,200, 6.5%), and Keningau (219,200, 5.5%). About 40% of the population was concentrated in the three most populous districts. On the other hand, Kuala Penyu has the smallest population size (0.6% of the state total), followed by Nabawan, Pitas, Sipitang, Tambunan, and Tongod, each making up merely 1% of the state population.
- In 2010, Kota Kinabalu was the most urbanised district, at 92.2% (besides Putatan, which was fully urbanised), followed by Penampang (91.2%), Sandakan (79.2%), and Tawau (66.7%). Six districts had no urban population in 2010 – Beluran, Pitas, Tenom, Nabawan, Tambunan, and Tongod. Only a few districts had undergone rapid urbanisation, and these include Tuaran, Kota Marudu, Sipitang, Papar, and Keningau².
- A greater diversity of ethnic groups characterizes Sabah's population compared to Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak. The main ethnic groups in Sabah comprises Kadazan/Dusun, Bajau, Murut, Malays, other Bumiputera, and the Chinese. The other Bumiputera comprises the Rungus, Brunei Malay, Orang Sungai, Lun Bawang, Lotud, Ida'an, Tambanuo, Maragang, Rumanau, Kadayan, Minokok, Mangka'ak, Kwijau, Iranun, Dumpas and Orang Asal, and others
- Religious affiliation is closely associated with ethnicity. Muslims made up close to two-thirds of Sabah's population in 2018. The Christians were the second-largest group (26.6%), and the Buddhists came in third (6.1%). Of the citizen population, Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists make up 58.0%, 31.5%, and 8.3% of the state population.

C. Changes in Age – Sex Structure

- The age structure of Sabah's population has changed significantly between 2000 and 2018. The median age of the population rose from 20.1 years to 26.1 years over this period. Over the 18 years, the proportion aged below 15 from 38.4% to 23.7%, while the proportion aged 15 – 64 increased from 59.2% to 73%, and that of older people increased from 2.3% to 3.3%.
- The number of young people (below 15) had decreased from 1,000,405 to 923,700. The population aged 15 – 64 had increased from 1,542,449 to 2,845,900 (an increase of 84.5%). The older population aged 65 and over had more than doubled from 60,631 to 128,800.

² Population Census 2010

Figure 2



Sources: Constructed from DOSM (2001a, 2019b)

Population Pyramid Sabah

- In 2018, out of the 542,000 persons aged 45 – 64, about 70% were in the labour force. Hence, close to half a million workers will be exiting the labour market soon. The ageing index rose from 6.1% in 2000 to almost 14% in 2019. While the population is still youthful, it will be ageing rapidly due to low fertility.
- The sex ratio of Sabah's population increased from 107 males per 100 females in 2000 and 2010 to 109 in 2018. The higher sex ratio could be due to the higher rate of migration among males. The males outnumbered the females by more than a ratio of 110:100, in each of the five-year age groups from 30 – 64. The age groups 30 – 39 registered the most significant increase in the sex ratio between 2000 and 2018. On the other hand, the sex ratio for the age groups 40 – 59 and 65 and above had registered the most significant decline.

D. Key Discussions and Recommendations

- The population growth rate in Sabah is below that of the national average (0.1% per annum compared to 0.4% for Malaysia). The attainment of zero population growth in Sabah results from ultra-low fertility and an exodus of migrants since 2018. However, the Department of Statistics Malaysia projected Sabah's population at 5.3 million in 2040. This projection was based on the assumption that non-citizens will make up 27% of the population³.
- The changing age structure is of great interest in development planning, as it directly impacts the dependency burden. Sabah is at the final stage of the demographic transition. The working-age population has been growing faster than the dependent population. This age structural shift resulted in a decline in the overall dependency ratio from about 69% in 2000 to 37% in 2018.

³ DOSM, 2016a

The demographic dividend resulting from the age structural changes provides a window of opportunity, called the demographic dividend.

Sabah Population Projection & Socioeconomic Needs

A. Total Fertility Rate in Sabah

- Sabah's TFR was the second-lowest in Malaysia (1.4 children per woman versus 1.8 children per woman at the national level), after Pulau Pinang (1.3)⁴.
- The fertility level in Sabah is comparable to that in some of the developed countries, such as Japan (1.4), Hong Kong (1.3), and Macau (1.2). The United Nations' World Population Prospects (2019) projected an increasing fertility trend in these countries beyond 2020 (under medium variant), and a rebound to the replacement level is possible in Sabah. This report presents three sets of population projection under three different scenarios:
 - i. assuming that the current fertility level of 1.4 remains constant throughout the projection period,
 - ii. assuming that the current fertility level of 1.4 increases linearly to 1.7 by 2050, as projected by the United Nations in the above mentioned developed countries, and
 - iii. assuming the current fertility level of 1.4 increases linearly to 2.1 by 2030, and constant thereafter until 2050, as per the objective of most countries to stabilise the fertility at replacement level.
 - iv.
- The life expectancy for both Sabah's males and females increased gradually over the past ten years to around 73 years for males and 76 years for females in 2020 (DOSM, 2013a, 2020g).

B. Estimating the Requirements for Educational Planning

- Secondary education is not universal in Sabah. In 2018, the enrolment rate was 88% for males and 94% for females (DOSM, 2019e). The number of secondary school students is projected to decrease from 356,946 to 264,709 between 2020 and 2040, and hovering around 330,000 – 340,000 over the remaining projection period. With a student-teacher ratio and a student-school ratio of 13 and 928, around 26,000 teachers and 400 schools are required to accommodate the secondary school-going children by 2050.
- Every year, a large share of government expenditure is allocated to education spending. Due to the decreasing number of school-going children, the amount to be spent on primary and secondary education will be decreasing from RM2,237.95 million and RM3,195.66 million in 2020 to RM2,225.55 million and RM3,065.35 million respectively by 2050. However, providing quality education will require additional resources even if the number of students is decreasing.

⁴ DOSM, 2020b

Hence, appropriate budget allocation for education should be considered to cater to the rising cost of education.

C. Estimating the Requirements for Healthcare Planning

- According to the My Local Stats, Malaysia, 2019 report, there are 4,557 doctors, 12,365 nurses, 333 clinics, 25 hospitals, and 4,808 hospital beds in Sabah. The medical personnel and resources are adequate to cater to healthcare needs in the future. Nevertheless, human resources for health should consider those who leave the services and under exceptional circumstances that require more medical resources, in the aftermath of COVID-19 outbreak in the state. The focus should also be directed to the needs of old-age specialist care, given the rising proportion of older people in the state in the future.
- Assuming that the health expenditure per capita remains constant at about RM836, the health expenditure will increase in tandem with the rising healthcare demand, from RM 2,352.28 million in 2020 to RM 3,128.60 million in 2050. However, health expenditure is likely to increase with the improvement in living standards and medical technology, and therefore a higher budget allocation for healthcare is indispensable in the future to support the growing number of older persons in Sabah.

D. Gender Gap in Educational Attainment in Sabah

- When it comes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, notably, Target 4.6, in ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men, and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030, Sabah needs to be proactive to address the current falling literacy rate. In 2014, the literacy rate for Sabahan males and females in the age group of 15 – 24 years was 87.8% and 90.1%, and it rose to 89.5% and 91.0% respectively in 2016, before declining to 85.1% and 85.6% respectively in 2019 (DOSM, 2017a, 2020i).
- The 2019 statistics showed that the literacy rate among Sabahan youths aged 15 – 24 years was the lowest across all the states in Malaysia. Lack of modern infrastructure and poor logistics over vast land areas are some factors that contributed to the low academic performance of youths in Sabah (Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Sabah, 2020).
- Women played an important role in the education system in Malaysia. Over half of the primary and secondary school teachers were female, except for Sarawak in 2019 at the primary level and Sabah in 2017 – 2018 at the secondary level.
- The 2010 population census showed that many school-age children in Sabah and Sarawak were out-of-school. Most out-of-school children were aged 10 – 12 in Sabah and 13 – 14 in Sarawak. About 5% of the Sabahan children aged 12 – 14 years were not studying, compared to about 2%

in Peninsular Malaysia. Among those aged 10 – 14, a higher proportion of Sabahan girls than boys were not in the schools, but the reverse was true in Sarawak.

- The proportion of children who were out-of-school in Sabah, Sarawak, and Peninsular Malaysia was 4.2%, 22.1%, and 1.4% among those aged 10 – 14 years. The comparative figures for those aged 15 – 19 were 26.1%, 67.9%, and 21.4% respectively. More than 90% of the Sabahan and Sarawakian youths aged 20 – 24 were out-of-school, compared to 87.9% in Peninsular Malaysia.
- The proportion of the population in the age group of 15 – 24 years who were not studying and not working in Sabah, Sarawak, and Peninsular Malaysia was 24.1%, 37.8%, and 17.8%, respectively. Nearly half of the Sarawakian aged 15 – 19 were not studying and not working (47.3%), compared to 17.9% in Sabah and 13.8% in Peninsular Malaysia. A higher proportion of the Sabahan (31.3%) in the age group of 20-24 years was not studying and not working than in Sarawak (27.3%) and Peninsular Malaysia (21.9%). Young females were more likely than males to be out-of-school and out-of-labour-force, especially in Sabah.

E. Women in The Labour Force

- The female labour force participation rate was significantly lower than males across all four marital groups. Males were more likely to participate in the workforce than females with the same marital status. The married category had the largest gender gap in labour force participation, as married women are responsible for household tasks and childcare. Among married males, more than 90% participate in the labour market, as compared to less than 60% of the females. The gender gap was larger in Sabah (47.7%), and this suggests that the degree of gender bias is more severe for married women in Sabah as compared to Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak.
- In Sabah, females had a lower participation rate in the labour market than males with the same educational qualification. However, the proportion improved with the higher educational qualification of the female. Moreover, the gender gap was wider for females without a certificate but reduced significantly with increasing female educational qualifications. Among females without a certificate, 48.5% participated in the labour market.
- A women-focused growth strategy can complement population ageing and productivity slowdown by reinforcing the contribution of labour and capital accumulation. Given the importance of female labour force participation to the economy, the government should undertake various efforts to promote the labour force participation of females in Sabah.
- The current maternity leave period should be extended. In the private sector, the current maternity leave entitlement for mothers is two months. This is lower than most advanced nations, in which maternity leave is usually standard at three months.

F. Marriage Trends and Patterns in Sabah

- The age 18 – 20 was the modal class for age at marriage among ever-married women in Sabah, accounting for 26% of the total. Almost one quarter (23.1%) married before 18. In other words, almost half of the ever-married women had married by age 20. About 15% each were married at ages 24 – 26 and 27 and over on the other end of the age spectrum. The proportion marrying before 18 decreased from 40.6% among women aged 55 – 59 to 8.6% among those aged 25 – 29. While these figures indicate that child marriage rates have reduced, the prevalence of child marriage is higher among rural women in Sabah and decreased with higher educational attainment - 28.2% of rural women were married before 18, and 57% were married by age 20. As many as 44.1% of the women with primary education were married before 18, three quarters were married by age 20. On the other hand, a few of those with post-secondary education were married before 17, suggesting marriage among students. However, more than two-thirds of the women with postsecondary education married after age 23.

G. The State of Family Planning in Sabah

- In 2011, the National Family Planning Programme recruited 62,054 new acceptors (26,631 from the urban areas and 35,423 from the rural areas). Of these, 7371 were from Sabah (2,731 urban and 4,640 rural acceptors), and 7891 were from Sarawak. The pill accounted for 63% of the acceptors, followed by the injection (17%), condom (11.5%), sterilisation (3.7%), and IUD (2.5%) (DOSM, 2012a).
- The traditional method usage had declined to about 16 – 17% of married women in the reproductive ages or 33% of all contraceptive users in 2004 and 2014.
- Close to 70% and 60% of the non-users in Sarawak and Sabah cited the desire to have children as the reason for not using a method. Fear of the side effects of contraceptive methods was mentioned by 14.9% and 16.8% of non-users in Sabah and Peninsular Malaysia, but only 7.8% of the non-users from Sarawak mentioned this as a reason. A small proportion of the respondents mentioned the husband's objection and belief in God as the reasons for non-use.
- Between 2004 and 2014, Sabah's contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) for all methods and modern methods increased slightly from 46.3% and 34.4% to 48.4% and 37.6%. In 2014, Sabah's CPR was significantly lower than that of Sarawak (65.4% for any method, and 47.4% for modern methods), but its CPR for the modern method was slightly higher than in Peninsular Malaysia, which recorded a rate of 33.6% in 2014.
- The low CPR for the modern method in Peninsular Malaysia runs contrary to expectation, given its higher development level and earlier launch of the national family planning programme. The pill was the most popular method in all three regions. Close to 10% of married women of reproductive age in Sabah were sterilised, and this was higher than Peninsular Malaysia (6%) but

slightly lower than Sarawak (11%). The injection was used by 12.9% of the married women in Sarawak, compared to 6.4% in Sabah and 4.2% in Peninsular Malaysia.

- In Sabah, the CPR for any method and the modern method was highest for women aged 25 – 39. Within each age group, Sabah's CPR was significantly lower than that in Sarawak (except for modern methods in the age group 25 – 29). Sabah's CPR of modern methods was significantly higher than Peninsular Malaysia, except for those aged 40 – 44.
- Sabah's women played a significant role in household decision making, as demonstrated by their involvement in the family planning decision. Among women with no schooling, close to three-quarters decided on family planning jointly with the husbands, and the rest decided on their own. Women with secondary education were more likely than those with primary or tertiary education to be the sole decision-makers on family planning.
- Sabah had a higher unmet need for any method than Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia, but it had a lower unmet need for modern methods than Peninsular Malaysia. In all three regions, the unmet need for limiting births accounted for about two-thirds of the total unmet need.

H. Family Planning Knowledge and Practice among Young People

- In Sabah, only 23.6% of the youths aged 13 – 14 heard of family planning, and it was twice as high for those aged 19 – 23. In terms of method, 27.1% of the youths in Sabah had heard about condoms. This proportion ranged from 10% among those aged 13 – 14 to 26.4% among those aged 19 – 24. The pill was the second most heard of modern method among the youth, across most of the age groups, and for both males and females. The rhythm and abstinence were the two commonly known methods to the youths, but these were mentioned by only 12% – 17% of the Sabah's youth covered in this survey. Females are more knowledgeable than males (49.1% versus 34.2%). A higher proportion of females than males reported knowing most contraceptive methods, except abstinence, cream, hormone dispatch, and male sterilisation (vasectomy).
- The urban youths were more knowledgeable about family planning and the various methods. Only 21% and 16.5% of the rural youths in Sabah had heard about the condom and the pill, compared to 31.4% and 22.4 % of their urban counterparts. As expected, those with higher education were more knowledgeable than those with a lower educational level.
- In Sabah, the proportion of the males and females who had sexual debut ranged from 6.7% and 1.7% among those with lower secondary education to 11.8% and 7.5% among those with post-secondary education. Of the 25 males who had sex, 32% used contraception, but none of the eight girls who had sex had used contraception

I. Women, Family and Gender Issues

- One typical problem that female-headed households face is the well-being of their families, particularly in coping with pressing family issues that can make it difficult for them to live a happy life. While it is a common argument that working women have to cope with the demands of family and workplace obligations (Noor, 2001), the demands are even greater for women who head their households. They are primarily involved in providing income and necessities for their families and always need to juggle between domestic and employment roles. As such, there is a high possibility for women who head their households to experience stress issues while performing the roles as the primary income earners and the nurturers of their families.
- Mothers frequently discussed with their children issues concerning education (75.7%), interaction with friends (68.6%), expenditure (74.3%), personal problems (55.1%), attire (65.7%), aspirations (59.0%), and special friends (40.6%). These percentages show that the interaction between women and their children is not only limited to formal matters such as education, ambition and financial expenses. The interaction also involved social aspects such as interactions with friends, special friends, personal problems, and attire.
- Most of the decisions they made can still be categorised as gender focused. Interestingly, the family system in Sabah was strengthened through active interactions between women and their children. However, the occurrences of financial problems among women in Sabah require further attention by policymakers.

J. Youth in Sabah

- Sabah, also known as the land below the wind, has several positive achievements in the youth sector. Sabah has been the first among all states in Malaysia to initiate and develop a youth index at the local level i.e. the Sabah Youth Index 2015 (SYI2015). Besides SYI2015, Sabah has also established its very own Sabah Youth Policy, as well as the Strategic Plan of Sabah Youth Development 2016 – 2020. These initiatives and positive progress manifest that youth empowerment is a significant agenda in the development of Sabah.
- Sabahan youth represents 14% of the total youth population in Malaysia, 2% higher as compared to its representation in the total population. While the proportion for non-citizens youth is huge with more than 30%, it is at a decreasing trend with a composition of 33% in 2017 and 30.4% in 2019.
- The labour force participation rate for youth between 20 – 24 years old and 25 – 29 years old is 65.6% and 73.7% respectively. The ratio of labour force participation for males is higher than for females for all ranges of age. While these data in Table 11.5 are not recent as they are based on Census 2010

- It is important to create a conducive environment to empower youth and their participation. For example, better coordination and partnership among stakeholders. A holistic view and implementation of a strategic plan would be helpful to bring youth to greater heights. Youth leadership is to be emphasised and promoted through positive youth development. While certain advancements in Sabah have benefitted the development and empowerment of youth, it is hoped that Sabah's experiences can be expanded to other areas in Malaysia.
- The top three highest correct responses among the adolescent in Sabah were for the statements that the most effective method to prevent pregnancy is by abstinence (74.5%), exchanging sex partners expose one to diseases (STDs) (70.2%), and having sexual intercourse with a girl aged below 16 years is a rape crime in Malaysia even if it is consensual sex (63.4%). However, less than 30% of the respondents knew that people with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) may look like a normal healthy person (26.4%) and that abortion can be carried out for specific reasons under the laws of Malaysia (9.9%).
- Among the adolescents in Sarawak, more than 50% knew the most effective method to prevent pregnancy is by abstinence (63.9%), exchanging sex partners expose one to diseases (STDs) (57.9%) and having sexual intercourse with a girl aged below 16 years is a rape crime in Malaysia (56.6%). Less than 30% knew that having sexual intercourse with a woman who is having her period would not lead to pregnancy (28.2%), people with a sexually transmitted disease (STD) may look like a normal healthy person (20.1%), and abortion can be carried out for specific reasons under the laws of Malaysia (9.2%).
- Among the adolescents in Peninsular Malaysia, more than 70% knew that exchanging sex partners expose one to STDs (81.7%), the most effective method to prevent pregnancy is by abstinence (77.0%) and having sexual intercourse with a girl aged below 16 years is a rape crime in Malaysia (75.7%). Less than 50% knew that having sexual intercourse with a woman who is having her period would not lead to pregnancy (42.6%), people with a sexually transmitted disease (STD) may look like a normal healthy person (34.2%), and abortion can be carried out for specific reasons under the laws of Malaysia (16.9%).
- The prevalence of sex was highest among adolescents in Peninsular Malaysia, with 11.5%, followed by Sarawak (7.2%) and Sabah (4.2%). Most of the respondents claimed that they had only one sex partner. Among those who had sexual experience, the adolescents in Sabah were less likely than those from Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia to report having sex with commercial sex workers and having sex for reward. More than 7% of the adolescents in Sarawak admitted having intercourse with a commercial sex worker, while more than 7% of the adolescents in Peninsular Malaysia have had sex for rewards (money, gifts, free meals, top-up, and others). With regards to pregnancy, among the respondents who had sex, 9.7% and 11.4% of the respondents in Sabah and Sarawak had experienced pregnancy or had caused someone to become pregnant.

**TO READ THE FULL REPORT ON THE
DEMOGRAPHIC AND
SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGES IN
SABAH, LOG ONTO UNFPA
MALAYSIA'S WEBSITE:**

<https://malaysia.unfpa.org/en/publications>

