

CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS IN NIUE

Niue is an island country in the South Pacific Ocean. The island is commonly referred to as The Rock, which comes from the traditional name Rock of Polynesia. Niue is one of the world's largest coral islands.



Land area
(km²)
259

2020 mid-year
population estimate
1,600

Population growth
rate (%)
-1.2

OVERVIEW

This civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) country profile for Niue is part of a series of country profiles for the Pacific Island region. The CRVS profiles consolidate knowledge shared by countries on the status of their CRVS systems in the recent past, including through government websites, published reports, media releases and presentations, and direct engagement between the authors of these profiles and in-country civil registration offices and health information offices. The objective of these CRVS country profiles is to provide a living resource (updated every 2-3 years) and quick reference point on the status and developments in CRVS systems in the Pacific Island region. The profiles provide an overview of the legislative, organisational and management frameworks of CRVS systems, registration processes, levels of completeness of birth and death registration, and the most recent developments towards improving CRVS systems. Whilst civil registration covers many vital events, these profiles focus on the registration of births and deaths, and collation of cause of death information. It is envisaged that these country profiles will serve as a fundamental tool in advocating for further investment in strengthening the coverage and completeness of CRVS systems across the Pacific Island region.

SOURCE OF BIRTH AND DEATH DATA

The source of figures in Table 1 (births) and Table 2 (deaths) is outlined below each table, with the full citation given in the Reference section at the end of the document. All figures were obtained from published sources or through direct contact with in-country civil registration offices and health information offices. The date figures were obtained through direct in-country contact is stated below the tables, and indicates when those figures were extracted from in-country databases.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Pacific Community and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2021. Civil registration and vital statistics in Niue. Noumea, New Caledonia: Pacific Community.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information please contact the Statistics for Development Division (SDD) – Pacific Community at: contact-sdd@spc.int; <https://sdd.spc.int/>

CRVS LEGISLATION, ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Current legal framework governing birth and death registration

The recording and registration of births and deaths in Niue is governed by the Births and Deaths Registration regulations of 1984, which require compulsory registration of all births and deaths occurring on the island and provide for non-compulsory registration of off-island events.

Agencies responsible for birth and death recording and registration

The Ministry of Health is responsible for the recording of births and deaths in health facilities and the community. The Civil Registry Office (CRO), which is part of the Department of Justice, Lands and Community Services, is responsible for overseeing the civil registration of births and deaths.

National CRVS committee and CRVS action plan

Niue has a national CRVS Committee comprised of the Ministry of Health, the CRO, and the Statistics Niue Office in the Ministry of Finance and Planning. The committee meets bi-annually.

National ID systems

Niue has no current plans to implement a national ID system.

REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS

Recording births at health facilities and registering births at the civil registry

For births, a Notification of Birth form is completed at the hospital and taken by health staff to the CRO. The information on the notification includes the sex of the child and the parents' names. This information is also entered on a hard copy register at the hospital. The parents are then required to complete the registration process at the CRO. Essentially, all births in Niue occur in the hospital, although there have been a few births outside the hospital, mainly at home and on the way to the hospital. In 2012, an obstetrician was appointed in Niue, which significantly reduced the number of women travelling to New Zealand to give birth. Prior to this, there were very few births on-island, with most women either referred through the health service or self-referring to New Zealand. The sharing of information/data across the Department of Health and the Department of Justice is done electronically.

Timeframes and costs

The legally stipulated period for birth registration is within 14 days of the birth.

Standard, on-time birth registration	no charge
Late registration (> 14 days)	50.00 (NZD)
Birth certificate printed	28.00 (NZD)

Tasks that require a birth certificate and incentives (financial or other) for completing the birth registration process

In October 2016, Niue introduced a Baby Incentive Grant whose implementation is linked to birth registration. The grant is for NZD 2,000.00 paid in four fortnightly instalments to Niuean parents, or parents with permanent residence. This grant has been particularly useful in enabling the government to maintain a complete record of births occurring overseas, as new mothers need to register their baby in the Niue Civil Registry in order to receive the grant (Stats Niue 2018c). A birth certificate is also required for accessing free health services and for enrolment in school.

Registration process for births occurring overseas

As New Zealand citizens, indigenous Niueans have access to specialised healthcare in New Zealand during

pregnancy, with the option to deliver their babies in a New Zealand hospital. Niuean residents may also be referred to New Zealand for specialised care under the medical referral scheme if warranted (Stats Niue 2018c). These overseas births are non-compulsorily registered in the Niuean CRO on return to the country. If registered, they are clearly identified as a birth which occurred overseas in published vital statistics (Stats Niue 2020). In recent years, around half of Niuean mothers have gone to New Zealand to give birth.

REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF DEATHS

Recording deaths at health facilities and registering deaths at the civil registry

Most deaths in Niue occur at the hospital or are reported to the hospital soon after occurrence. According to the regulations, the medical practitioner issuing a death certificate must provide the registrar with the particulars of death (including a medical certificate of the cause of death) within 24 hours of occurrence of the event, after which the death is registered. The registrar then issues authority for burial of the deceased, without which burial is in contravention and punishable by law. The birth and death regulations further require that every minister of religion or person who performs any religious or funeral service for or at the burial forwards a written notice of the burial to the registrar within seven days.

Timeframes and costs

Current legislation states that persons responsible for reporting deaths should furnish particulars of the death to the registrar withing 24 hours of the event.

Standard, on-time death registration	no charge
Late registration	not applied
Death certificate printed	28.00 (NZD)

Tasks that require a death certificate and incentives (financial or other) for completing the death registration process

A death certificate is required for inheritance of land, property and estates of deceased persons.

Registration process for deaths occurring overseas

Deaths that occur overseas are registered in the Niue Civil Registry if the body is returned to the country for burial and if the deceased had been residing in Niue within 12 months prior to their death. In such cases, the family is required to provide the registrar with a death certificate issued in the country where death occurred. If a death occurs overseas to a person of Niuean descent who was not residing in Niue for the past 12 months or more, and the body is flown back to Niue for burial, it will be recorded in the Civil Registry as an overseas death. If a death occurs overseas to a resident of Niue and the body is not flown back for burial, the death will not be recorded in the Niue Civil Registry, even if the deceased only recently left Niue as a medical referral. Suggestions have been made to request data from New Zealand, but Statistics New Zealand has noted that the place of residence is often not recorded well in their collection. For example, the place of residence may be recorded as 'a relative's place' rather than their permanent home in Niue. For this reason, it is not possible to use the New Zealand data to accurately monitor deaths of Niue residents in New Zealand (Stats Niue 2018c).

COLLATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF CAUSE OF DEATH

Process for coding death certificates

All deaths in Niue are certified by a medical doctor according to the international format for classification of diseases specified by WHO. In cases where a death was not attended by a medical practitioner, the director of health, or his/her deputy, or an authorised medical practitioner is required to deliver to the registrar a certificate stating, to the best of his/her knowledge, the cause of death (underlying and contributory causes) of the deceased. A senior nurse officer does the coding of all causes of death in Niue. Over the past few years, Niue has

been using the ICD-10 short mortality list for coding causes of death. More recently, however, the government is looking to adopt the full ICD-10 coding format for coding, and to continue reporting from the ICD-10 General Mortality list.

COMPLETENESS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION DATA

The completeness of birth and death registration can be estimated by comparing the number of births and deaths in the civil registry with the number of births and deaths recorded by the health system, enumerated during national censuses, and estimated by international agencies. In some countries in the Pacific region, including Niue, the births and deaths of citizens overseas can be registered in the civil registry. When estimating completeness, it is best that these overseas births and deaths are not included in the civil registry figures since the other sources to which they are compared, such as health records, do not include overseas events. In Niue however, an understanding of how many births and deaths among the resident population have occurred overseas is particularly important, given the high number of events that occur overseas, mostly in New Zealand. In some years, more Niuean mothers travel to New Zealand to give birth than those who remain in Niue to deliver. The medical referral programme also sends a lot of Niueans overseas for medical treatment, where they may die. Because of the high number of overseas births and deaths in Niue, Tables 1 and 2 below include the total number of events registered in the civil registry (in-country and overseas events) but, where possible, the number of events that happened overseas is shown in brackets. In addition, these overseas events have not been included in the calculation of the completeness between the civil registry and health, census and SPC projections. For example, in 2016, 27 births were registered in the civil registry, of which eight occurred in New Zealand. When the remaining 19 births occurring in Niue are compared with the figures from health records for the same year, the estimated completeness of the civil registry is 95%.

Table 1. Completeness of birth registration data

Year	Source of births				Completeness of birth registration		
	Civil Registry ^a	Health ^b	SPC projection ^c	Census ^d	Compared with health	Compared with SPC	Compared with census
2018	25 (15)	13	19 ^e	-	77% [^]	>	-
2017	22 (5)	18	-	-	94% [^]	-	-
2016	27 (8)	20	-	-	95% [^]	-	-
2015	26 (5)	21	-	-	100% [^]	-	-
2014	20 (5)	15	-	-	100% [^]	-	-
2013	25 (6)	19	-	-	100% [^]	-	-
2012	33 (6)	27	-	-	100% [^]	-	-
2011	22 (8)	15	-	-	93% [^]	-	-
2010	25 (14)	11	-	-	100% [^]	-	-

^eBecause of the high number of overseas births and deaths in Niue, the total number of births registered in the civil registry (in-country and overseas births) has been displayed in the table above, but the number of births that occurred overseas is shown in brackets. These overseas births have not been included in the calculation of the completeness between the civil registry and health.

Sources: ^aCivil Registration Office (Stats Niue 2019a; 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2012a). ^bObtained directly from Niue Ministry of Health on 20.12.2020. ^cCalculated from 2018 crude birth rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). ^dThe 2011 and 2017 censuses provide an annual average of births during the intercensal period based on civil registration data, not the census questionnaire (Stats Niue 2012b; Stats Niue 2019b). ^eCompleteness was calculated by dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'Health', after births that occurred overseas (in brackets) were removed from the figure for the civil registry; ^fThe SPC projection has not been used to estimate the completeness of the civil registry because of the situation in Niue, where a large proportion of births occur overseas, and it is unclear if this has been taken into account in the calculation of the SPC projection.

Table 2 shows that, like births, comparison of the civil registry with health records indicates that the civil registry has 100% completeness in capturing deaths that occur in Niue. Comparison with the 2017 census is not possible, as the census did not ask questions on annual all-age mortality.

Table 2. Completeness of death registration data

Year	Source of deaths				Completeness of death registration		
	Civil Registry ^a	Health ^b	SPC projection ^c	Census ^d	Compared with health	Compared with SPC	Compared with census
2018	19 (6)	16	17 ^e	-	-	>	-
2017	14 (3)	-	-	-	-	-	-
2016	6 (1)	5	-	-	100% ^f	-	-
2015	16 (2)	14	-	-	100% ^f	-	-
2014	5 (0)	5	-	-	100% ^f	-	-
2013	13 (0)	13	-	-	100% ^f	-	-
2012	8 (0)	8	-	-	100% ^f	-	-
2011	9 (1)	-	-	-	-	-	-
2010	15 (1)	-	-	-	-	-	-

Because of the high number of overseas deaths in Niue, the total number of deaths registered in the civil registry (in-country and overseas deaths) has been displayed in the table above, but the number of deaths that occurred overseas is shown in brackets. These overseas deaths have not been included in the calculation of the completeness between the civil registry and health.

Sources: ^aCivil Registration Office (Stats Niue 2019a; 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2012a). ^bObtained directly from Niue Ministry of Health on 20.12.2020. ^cCalculated from 2018 crude death rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). ^dThe only question related to mortality in the 2011 and 2017 census was the number of children ever born and still alive. The census states that the inputs used to calculate life expectancy are based on mortality data from the civil registry (Stats Niue 2012b; Stats Niue 2019b). ^eCompleteness was calculated by dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'Health' after deaths that occurred overseas (in brackets) were removed from the figure for the Civil Registry; ^fThe SPC projection has not been used to estimate the completeness of the civil registry because of the unique situation in Niue, where a large proportion of deaths occur overseas, and it is unclear if this has been taken into account in the calculation of the SPC projection.

PUBLICATION OF CRVS DATA AND REPORTS

Every six months, data on births and deaths is collated by the CRO and sent to the Niue Statistics Office for analytical purposes. The Niue Statistics Office publishes a bi-annual release of vital statistics, which includes births and deaths. Niue has also published two comprehensive vital statistics reports from civil registration data, covering events that occurred between 1996 and 2011 (Stats Niue 2012a) and between 2012 and 2016 (Stats Niue 2018c).

RECENT INITIATIVES AND PLANS TO STRENGTHEN CRVS

1. In order to ensure completeness in vital statistics reporting and to securely manage and close identities (once deceased), Niue is working with the government of New Zealand to establish an information-sharing arrangement (through a memorandum of understanding), in which both governments will share information about deaths and name changes occurring overseas.
2. In 2016, Niue introduced a Baby Incentive Grant, whose implementation is linked to birth registration. This grant has been useful in enabling the government to maintain a complete record of births occurring overseas; new mothers are encouraged to report these events upon their return to Niue.
3. The government is exploring the use of immunisation records to identify off-island births to resident mothers who have chosen not to register the birth in Niue (as this is optional) in order to ensure that all births to the resident population are captured (Stats Niue 2018c).

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