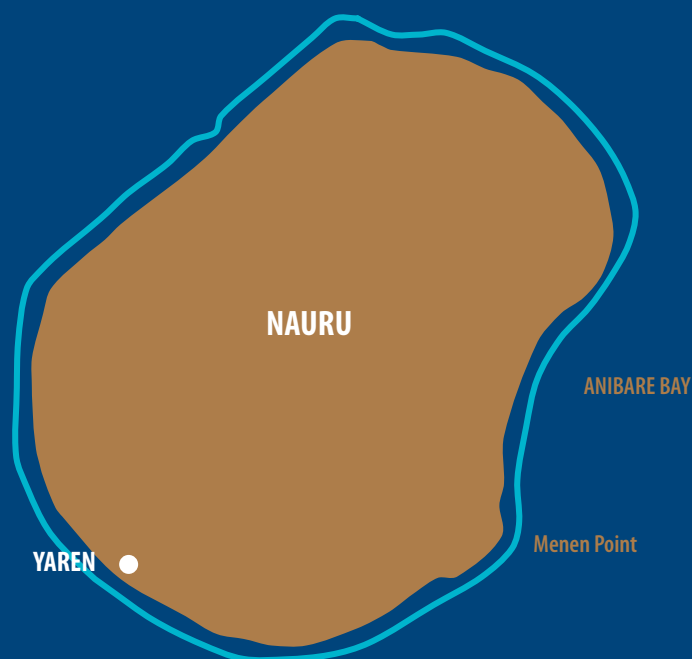


CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS IN NAURU

Formerly known as Pleasant Island, the Republic of Nauru is an island country in Micronesia, a sub-region of Oceania, in the Central Pacific. With only a 21 km² area, it is the smallest state in the South Pacific Ocean.



Land area
(km²)
21

2020 mid-year
population estimate
11,700

Population growth
rate (%)
1.6

OVERVIEW

This civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) country profile for Nauru 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 Nauru. 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, ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

Current legal framework governing birth and death registration

The recording and registration of births and deaths in Nauru is governed by the Nauruan Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act of 2017, which was implemented on 1 February 2018.

Agencies responsible for birth and death recording and registration

Nauru has one main hospital where most births and deaths in the country occur. Civil registration is managed by the Civil Registration Office (CRO), which is a section under the Chief Secretary Department.

National CRVS committee and CRVS action plan

Nauru has a CRVS Committee which was formed in August 2020, and is comprised of the CRO, the Ministry of Health, and the Bureau of Statistics. Nauru has not undertaken a comprehensive assessment based on existing CRVS assessment frameworks, but several non-standardised reviews have been undertaken by SPC in the past. They provide information on Nauru's civil registration system and could be used as key inputs for a comprehensive assessment.

National ID systems

In 2017 Nauru passed legislation for implementation of national ID codes. However, plans for rolling out an ID system/codes are yet to be established.

REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS

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

Nearly all births in Nauru occur in the main hospital. When a birth occurs outside the hospital, the mother and her baby are brought to the hospital soon after birth. Nursing staff record the birth in the ward logbook and the bed census form. A registration number is created for each event, and a letter is issued to the parent. The letter is to be used for claiming the birth payment (see details below). Details of births are shared by the hospital to the CRO on a monthly basis. Parents complete the registration process by taking the letter to the CRO where the information is verified against the records provided by the hospital. A hard copy form is completed at the CRO, a registration number is issued for each event, and a file is created. The data are also entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. There are two separate birth registration databases maintained, one for Nauruans and one for non-Nauruans. There have been two attempts to digitise registration processes through the adoption of customised civil registration software, but these have not been successful.

Timeframes and costs

Civil registration of births is compulsory and must be completed within 21 days of a birth. Whilst there is a provision in the current legislation for a fee for late registration, it has not yet been regulated or enforced.

Standard, on-time birth registration	no charge
Late registration (> 21 days)	not applicable*
Birth certificate printed	10.00 (AUD)

*There is a stipulated fee, but it has not yet been regulated.

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

A woman giving birth to a child is entitled to a one-off payment of AUD 100 from the government treasury. The money provides support to purchase a start-up kit for the newborn. This initiative was introduced in 2005 by the new and incoming reform government. The mother can collect the funds only after presentation of the baby's

birth certificate, and it is reported that this has led to increased birth registration (ADB 2012). Birth registration is required for enrolment in school, and the CRO provides the Education Department with the national birth registration list for children turning five years old each year (UNESCAP 2020).

Registration process for births occurring overseas

Many births occur overseas due to medical referral or by choice of the parents. The birth can be recorded by the CRO upon presentation of the overseas birth certificate. There are two separate birth registration databases maintained by the civil registry, one for Nauruan citizens and one for non-Nauruans.

REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF DEATHS

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

Nearly all deaths are reported through the hospital. When a death occurs in the hospital, nursing staff record it in the ward logbook and the bed census form. A registration number is created for each event. A medical practitioner is required to complete the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD). Two copies of the MCCD are created; one is filed at the hospital, while the other is delivered or emailed to the CRO. Parents or immediate family must attend the CRO to complete the death registration process. At the CRO, details of the death are entered into the logbook as soon as a notification is received. The logbook is also used to assign an index, or registration number. When the family comes to register the death, they are asked to complete a registration form, the details are checked against the information provided by the hospital in the logbook (which is then marked as registered), and the medical certificate is filed (separately for Nauruan and non-Nauruan deaths). A death certificate is then manually generated in Microsoft Word. The information is entered into a spreadsheet, and details are retyped from the index logbook (which is the most up-to date source) for inclusion in the government gazette on a monthly basis.

Timeframes and costs

Registration of deaths is compulsory but no fee is enforced for late registration.

Standard, on-time death registration	no charge
Late registration	not applicable
Death certificate printed	10.00 (AUD)

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

The spouse or family member of a deceased person can file a claim for AUD 2,000.00 from the government treasury. The money helps the family to purchase a coffin, clothes and other necessities for funeral arrangements. This assistance was introduced in 2005 by the new and incoming reform government. In 2010–2011, a claim for AUD 500.00 for stillborn babies was introduced (ADB 2012). The system for issuance of these payments has been tightened over the past several years to ensure that a death certificate or stillbirth certificate has been obtained prior to the payment being issued. There are anecdotal reports that, prior to the introduction of the stillbirth payment in 2010–2011, pressure was placed on doctors to issue a death certificate for stillbirths to allow families to access the funeral payment, as well as to formally recognise the event. This may result in inaccurately low reporting of stillbirths and inflated reporting of neonatal deaths.

Registration process for deaths occurring overseas

Deaths that occur overseas, which is common due to medical referral or by choice of the individual if they can afford to, can be recorded by the CRO upon presentation of the overseas death certificate by a family member. There are two separate death registration databases maintained by the civil registry, one for Nauruan citizens and one for non-Nauruans.

COLLATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF CAUSE OF DEATH

Process for coding death certificates

All deaths have to be medically certified by a medical practitioner. The medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) used in Nauru largely aligns with the WHO international format. However, it contains an extra line above the causal sequence lines that can create challenges with ICD-10 coding and determining the underlying cause of death. The MCCD also does not enable collection of other key variables recommended by the WHO to add further clarity to the circumstances surrounding a death (considered as Frame B of the death certificate or notification form). Nauru has a high turnover of doctors on relatively short-term contracts. The medical certificate is completed by whichever doctor last saw the patient. This may not be the doctor who treated the patient. This affects the quality of the cause of death information captured, with close to one third of deaths classified as ill-defined in nature between 2015 and 2019 (NBoS and SPC 2019). Mortality coding from the medical certificates is currently not taking place in Nauru. In May 2018, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) supported the country in coding data for the years 2014 to 2017. There are also plans by the government to seek routine off-island coding support from ABS. Modalities for establishing this form of support are under way, including the drafting of a memorandum of understanding between the two parties.

Training and resources for cause of death certification and coding

In 2019, medical coders from Nauru participated in a two-week attachment programme in the ABS, supported by SPC. There are plans by the government to seek routine off-island coding support from ABS.

COMPLETENESS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION DATA

Birth and death registration completeness is high in Nauru. This is due to the majority of births and deaths occurring in the hospital on the main island, good data-sharing between the hospital and the CRO, and strong financial incentives – a birth payment and a funeral assistance payment – tied to birth and death registration. 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, 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 Nauru however, an understanding of how many births and deaths among the resident population have occurred overseas is important, given the high number of events that occur overseas, mostly in Australia and Fiji. Because of this high number, Tables 1 and 2 include the total number of events registered in the civil registry (in-country and overseas events), but the number of the events that occurred overseas is shown in brackets. 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 2015 there were 402 births registered in the civil registry, of which 34 occurred overseas. When the 34 overseas births are excluded and the remaining births in the civil registry are compared with the figures from health for the same year, the estimated completeness of the civil registry is 98%.

Table 1 shows that, between 2010 and 2018, birth registration completeness when compared to health records has remained $\geq 90\%$ in recent years and for 2010–2014 it exceeds 100%. The civil registry also has higher than 100% completeness when compared to the census estimate for births in 2011. Comparison with the SPC projection for 2018 indicates a completeness of around 87%. The number of births registered in the civil registry in the most recent years (2017–2018) is lower than earlier years, and suggests that there are late birth registrations that have not yet been registered in the civil registry for these years. The reason for $\geq 100\%$ completeness of the civil registry in comparison to health records and the census in 2010–2013 requires further investigation.

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	300 (25)	-	316	-	-	87% [^]	-
2017	334 (31)	336	-	-	90% [^]	-	-
2016	393 (34)	391	-	-	92% [^]	-	-
2015	402 (34)	374	-	-	98% [^]	-	-
2014	353 (37)	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013	361 (31)	320	-	-	103% [^]	-	-
2012	397 (28)	366	-	-	101% [^]	-	-
2011	455 (44)	370	-	366	111% [^]	-	112% [^]
2010	385 (42)	333	-	-	103% [^]	-	-

Because of the high number of overseas births and deaths in Nauru, the total number of events registered in the civil registry (in-country and overseas events) has been displayed in the table above, but the number of those events which occurred overseas is shown in brackets. The overseas events have not been included in the calculation of the completeness between the civil registry and health, census and SPC projections.

Sources: ^aObtained directly from the Nauru Civil Registration Office on 14.12.2020. ^bMinistry of Health (NBoS, DoH and SPC 2019; NBoS, DoH and SPC 2015). ^cCalculated from 2018 crude birth rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). ^dCalculated from the crude birth rate published in the most recent census in 2011 (Government of Nauru 2012). [^]Completeness calculated by dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'Health', dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'SPC projection', and dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'Census', after births which occurred overseas (in brackets) were removed from the figures for the civil registry.

Table 2 shows that between 2010 and 2018, death registration completeness when compared to health records has remained $\geq 100\%$, even after the exclusion of overseas deaths. The civil registry also has higher than 100% completeness when compared to the census estimate for deaths in 2011. Comparison with the SPC projection for 2018 indicates a completeness of around 95%. The reason for $\geq 100\%$ completeness of the civil registry in comparison to health records and the census requires further investigation.

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	88 (6)	-	86	-	-	95% [^]	-
2017	103 (7)	89	-	-	108% [^]	-	-
2016	103 (3)	77	-	-	130% [^]	-	-
2015	95 (13)	76	-	-	108% [^]	-	-
2014	103 (11)	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013	103 (3)	95	-	-	105% [^]	-	-
2012	81 (4)	71	-	-	108% [^]	-	-
2011	78 (0)	68	-	65	115% [^]	-	120% [^]
2010	71 (2)	69	-	-	100% [^]	-	-

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

Sources: ^aObtained directly from the Nauru Civil Registration Office on 14.12.2020. ^bMinistry of Health (NBoS, DoH and SPC 2019; NBoS, DoH and SPC 2015). ^cCalculated from 2018 crude death rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). ^dThe number of deaths reported in the 12 months preceding the most recent census in 2011 (Government of Nauru 2012). [^]Completeness was calculated by dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'Health', dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'SPC projection', and dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'Census', after births that occurred overseas (in brackets) were removed from the figures for the civil registry.

PUBLICATION OF CRVS DATA AND REPORTS

The Nauru Bureau of Statistics routinely uses civil registration data to complement its other data sources for its vital statistics releases. Data-sharing between the CRO and the National Statistics Office (NSO) occurs sporadically, upon request by the NSO. While there is no established schedule to analyse and publish vital statistics data, the Nauru government published a vital statistics report in 2015, based on civil registration and health data for the period 2008–2013, and a second report was published in 2019, based on civil registration and health data for the period 2015–2017. The reports provide birth and death completeness estimates and key fertility and mortality indicators.

RECENT INITIATIVES AND PLANS TO STRENGTHEN CRVS

1. The Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is planning to expand the twinning program that is running in other areas of the Pacific to include Nauru. The objectives of the twinning program include strengthening the rate of birth and death registrations, establishing a mentoring program with key staff in an Australian civil registry, strengthening overall registry practices, and promoting awareness among government and the community on the importance of CRVS to identify security and government planning more broadly.
2. The Ministry of Health is currently being supported by SPC and BAG to undertake an audit of the quality of medical certification and coding of causes of death for deaths that occurred in 2018 and 2019.
3. In 2019, Nauru published its second national vital statistics report on births, deaths and causes of death for the period 2015–2017.
4. In 2019, medical coders from Nauru participated in a two-week attachment programme in the Australian Bureau of Statistics, supported by SPC.
5. Nauru recently revised its civil registration legislation.
6. The government recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Australia focussed on security partnership. This partnership is envisaged to support improvements in the operations of the civil registration office, including the security of records and documents.
7. Nauru is looking towards acquiring a civil registration IT system platform that would support electronic recording at the civil registration office and improve the storage and archival of registration records.
8. Conservation of existing old paper records is a key priority for the civil registration office of Nauru, noting that most of these records are routinely referenced but are at risk of loss and damage due to age.
9. There are plans to adopt the new WHO format of the medical certificate of cause of death.

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