

CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS IN NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (COMMONWEALTH OF THE)

The Northern Mariana Islands, officially the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), is an insular area and a commonwealth of the United States of America (USA). It consists of 14 islands in the north-western Pacific Ocean. CNMI and Guam are the westernmost points and territories of USA (in terms of jurisdiction).



Land area
(km²)
457

2020 mid-year
population estimate
56,600

Population growth
rate (%)
0.4

OVERVIEW

This civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) country profile for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands 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 the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. 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 the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) is governed by the Vital Statistics Act of 2006, enacted in 2007.

Agencies responsible for birth and death recording and registration

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) oversees CNMI's single healthcare facility, the Commonwealth Health Center, as well as two satellite health centers for the islands of Tinian and Rota. The healthcare system utilizes an electronic health record to report and certify vital events occurring in CNMI (on Saipan, Tinian and Rota islands). Medical birth and death forms are scanned and electronically sent to the National Center for Health Statistics in USA for medical coding (birth and death coding). Medical coding results are electronically returned to CNMI for analysis and reporting to the CNMI government and other stakeholders. Recording of vital events is the responsibility of the Health and Vital Statistics Office (HVSVO), which is also under the CHCC. The HVSVO is responsible for the issuance of birth and death certificates, but also the administration of the system of vital statistics throughout CNMI. The HVSVO is located at the national hospital, the Commonwealth Health Center, in Saipan.

National CRVS committee and CRVS action plan

CNMI does not have a CRVS committee.

National ID systems

The Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Department of Public Safety is responsible for implementing Real ID in CNMI.

REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS

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

Most births occur at CNMI's single healthcare facility in Saipan, the Commonwealth Health Center, or at the two satellite health centers on the islands of Tinian and Rota. In cases where the birth did not take place in a health facility, the law requires the physician in attendance, or the mother or father of the child to report the birth to the nearest health facility. In CNMI, births that are recorded in the health system are managed by the CHCC, which is also responsible for birth registration and the issuance of birth certificates. Because the same agency is responsible for both functions, all births that are recorded in the health system are automatically registered in the civil registry. CNMI has a unique situation, where up to 50% of births that occur in the country are to women who are not citizens. 38% of all births in CNMI between 2013 and 2018 were to mothers who entered the country on a tourist visa, primarily from China (CSD 2016; UNESCAP 2019).

Timeframes and costs

Registration of births is compulsory by law in CNMI and should be conducted within five days of the event. However, there is no penalty for late registration.

Standard, on-time birth registration	no charge
Late registration	not applicable
Birth certificate printed	25.00 (USD)

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

A birth certificate is required for issuance of a passport, enrolment in school, and to apply for a Medicaid card, which each child born in CNMI is entitled to.

Registration process for births occurring overseas or births to foreigners

CNMI has a very high proportion of 'tourist births', whereby a pregnant woman enters the country on a tourist visa in order to deliver her child in CNMI. The number of tourist births has been steadily increasing since 2010

(Table 1), with tourist births constituting 40% of all births between 2014 and 2018. Pregnant women come to CNMI to give birth because children born in CNMI are automatically given US citizenship, regardless of the nationality of their parents. And when the child reaches 21 years of age, they are able to receive a visa for their parents to emigrate to USA. It is uncommon for pregnant women who reside in CNMI to travel outside CNMI for the purpose of delivering their babies. Overseas births registered in CNMI are usually because of adoption. In these instances, the Registrar is required to prepare and register a Certificate of Foreign Birth for a person born in a foreign country who is not a USA citizen and who was adopted through the CNMI Superior Court.

REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF DEATHS

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

Most deaths occur at CNMI's single healthcare facility in Saipan, the Commonwealth Health Center, or at the two satellite health centers on the islands of Tinian and Rota. A medical practitioner completes a medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD). When a death occurs in the community, the body is usually transported to the morgue at the Commonwealth Health Center or the satellite health centers, and an MCCD is completed. In CNMI, deaths that occur in the health system are managed by the CHCC, which is also responsible for death registration and the issuance of death certificates. Because the same agency is responsible for both functions, all deaths that are recorded in the health system are automatically registered in the civil registry.

Timeframes and costs

Registration of deaths is compulsory by law in CNMI, and must be conducted within five days of occurrence of the death and prior to the disposal of the remains. There is no penalty for late registration.

Standard, on-time death registration	no charge
Late registration	not applicable
Death certificate printed	20.00 (USD)

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

The Health and Vital Statistics Office (HSVO) is not required to register deaths that occurred outside CNMI's jurisdiction but death certificates of CNMI residents who died in any of the US States and Territories are reported to HSVO by the state and/or territorial registrar for record keeping. CNMI residents who die in any foreign country are reported to HSVO through the USA Department of State.

COLLATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF CAUSE OF DEATH

Process for coding death certificates

Certification and coding of cause of death is undertaken in accordance with the International Classification of Diseases (10th edition). Only clinicians can certify deaths, and all deaths must be certified within 48 hours of occurrence. CNMI uses the USA Standard Certificate of Death for recording the details of a death and its causes (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/DEATH11-03final-acc.pdf>).

Training and resources for cause of death certification and coding

CNMI developed standard operating procedures (SOP 3165 and 3166) and incorporated training materials provided by the National Centers for Health Statistics for physicians and HSVO staff in order to improve data quality and reporting timeliness. All medical death certificates are scanned and electronically sent to the National Centres for Health Statistics in USA to be coded and the coded data are then sent back to CNMI. As mortality coding of death certificates is done remotely in USA, there is no training on International Classification of Disease mortality coding in CNMI.

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 CNMI, records of births and deaths in the health system are managed by the CHCC, which is also responsible for birth and death registration and the issuance of birth and death certificates. Because the same agency is responsible for both functions, the number of births and deaths recorded in health records is the same as the number registered through civil registration. Therefore, an estimate of completeness by comparison of the civil registry with health records cannot be undertaken. The registration of births and deaths in CNMI is considered to be complete.

In Table 1, the column for births in the civil registry is inclusive of tourist births but the number of tourist births is given in brackets next to the total figure. For example, in 2018 there were 1,262 births registered in the civil registry, of which 581 were to mothers who were in CNMI on a tourist visa for a short period of time to deliver their baby before leaving the country. Over the past ten years, the number of tourist births has continuously risen – from 70 in 2010 up to 581 in 2018. See the section above on births to foreigners for more details.

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	1,262 (581)	na	736	-	na	93%*	-
2017	1,209 (562)	na	-	-	na	-	-
2016	1,217 (482)	na	-	-	na	-	-
2015	1,107 (379)	na	-	-	na	-	-
2014	1,057 (314)	na	-	-	na	-	-
2013	1,057 (287)	na	-	-	na	-	-
2012	1,129 (319)	na	-	-	na	-	-
2011	1,033 (221)	na	-	-	na	-	-
2010	1,075 (70)	na	-	-	na	-	-

Sources: ^aObtained directly from the Health and Vital Statistics Office, Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation 18/11/2020. The figures in brackets are the number of tourist births included in the civil registry figures. ^bCivil Registry' and 'Health' are the same dataset in CNMI. ^cCalculated from 2018 crude birth rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). ^dThe most recent census in 2010 did not ask questions on the annual number of births, and therefore could not be used to estimate the completeness of death registration. *Completeness was calculated by dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'SPC projection' after tourist births were removed from the civil registry figure.

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	221	na	264	-	na	84%	-
2017	235	na	-	-	na	-	-
2016	222	na	-	-	na	-	-
2015	225	na	-	-	na	-	-
2014	209	na	-	-	na	-	-
2013	200	na	-	-	na	-	-
2012	175	na	-	-	na	-	-
2011	161	na	-	-	na	-	-
2010	172	na	-	-	na	-	-

Sources: ^aObtained directly from the Health and Vital Statistics Office, Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation 18/11/2020. ^bCivil Registry' and 'Health' are the same dataset in CNMI. ^ccalculated from 2018 crude death rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). ^dThe most recent census in 2010 did not ask questions on all-age annual mortality, and therefore could not be used to estimate the completeness of death registration. Completeness was calculated by dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'SPC projection'.

PUBLICATION OF CRVS DATA AND REPORTS

CNMI has periodically published a statistical yearbook which contains data on births and deaths. The most recent publication was the 2015 CNMI Statistical Yearbook (CSD 2016).

RECENT INITIATIVES AND PLANS TO STRENGTHEN CRVS

1. In line with the CHCC efforts and commitments to modernize health information technologies, CNMI began the process of implementing a new Electronic Vital Registration System (EVRS) acquired through Axiell ALM, Inc., a software vendor and consultant that specializes in software for registries and vital records. The project is supported by Center for Disease Control and its implementation is near completion. This project started in 2019 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2020 (CHCC 2019).
2. In July 2020, the CHCC management approved another proposal from General Electric Healthcare to begin work with Axiell and the CHCC health information technology team on an integration solution that will enable systems to seamlessly do periodic transfers of data from the hospital's labour and delivery clinic to the EVRS system. The project started in October 2020 and is tentatively scheduled to go live in the first quarter of 2021.

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