Solomon Islands is a sovereign state in Oceania consisting of six major islands and over 900 smaller islands. It lies to the east of Papua New Guinea and northwest of Vanuatu. The country’s capital, Honiara, is located on the island of Guadalcanal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land area (km²)</th>
<th>2020 mid-year population estimate</th>
<th>Population growth rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28,230</td>
<td>712,100</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS IN SOLOMON ISLANDS**
OVERVIEW

This civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) country profile for Solomon 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


FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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CRVS LEGISLATION, ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

Current legal framework governing birth and death registration
The recording and registration of births and deaths in Solomon Islands is governed by the Births and Deaths (Registration) Act. The national CRVS Committee of Solomon Islands, with support from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative and UNICEF, is in the process of reviewing the current legislation, given that it has not been updated or revised since its initial introduction over 30 years ago.

Agencies responsible for birth and death recording and registration
The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MoHMS) is responsible for the recording of births and deaths in health facilities and the community, with collation of these records at the national level undertaken by the Health Information System (HIS) Office located in Honiara. Civil registration functions in Solomon Islands fall under two ministries. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) has the primary responsibility for registration of births and deaths among Solomon Island nationals, while births, deaths and marriages of foreigners are registered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade (MFAET) in a separate registration database, which also collects details of marriages between foreigners and Solomon Islanders. The MFAET registry deals with only a very small number of events, usually less than 50 per year.

National CRVS committee and CRVS action plan
Solomon Islands has a national CRVS strategy and plan, whose implementation is led by the MoHA, and supported by a multisectoral national CRVS Committee. This is comprised of the MoHMS; the National Statistics Office under the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey; and the Prime Minister’s Office.

National ID systems
Solomon Islands 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 that occur in a health facility or are attended by health staff (e.g. doctor or nurse), a Notification of Birth form is completed, and a copy provided to the parents. Through an agreement with the MoHA, MoHMS staff at the national referral hospital in Honiara are required to enter these notifications directly into the civil registration electronic database for review and authorisation by the MoHA. Once authorised, the registration is completed, and certificates are sent by the MoHA to the hospital for collection. Birth notifications from other health facilities are forwarded to the national HIS Office, attached to the monthly health reports, and entered into the MoHMS electronic system. The Notification of Birth forms are transferred from the HIS Office to the MoHA for registration. Once registration is complete, birth certificates are sent by the MoHA to the national HIS office, and are thereafter transferred to the health facilities for collection. There is no defined timeline for the movement of the forms or certificates, as this process is dependent on the availability and travel schedule of health workers. Because there are no formal channels for moving the forms, it often takes 9 to 12 months for the forms to reach Honiara, and many people travel to Honiara to register births in order to expedite the process. Births that occur in the community are usually recorded by community health staff within the first few weeks after the birth, during community health and immunisation programs. In these cases, where a child's birth has not previously been recorded, a Notification of Birth form is completed and forwarded to the national HIS office, with a copy also provided to the parents. Birth registration is both electronic (records are entered into a commercial electronic database referred to as Promadis) and paper based.

Timeframes and costs
The law states that registration of births is to be completed ‘when practicable’, with no specific timeframe given. Birth registration and issuance of a birth certificate are free within five years of the birth, after which an SBD 10.00 fee is charged for both registration and issuance of a certificate.
REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF DEATHS

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

To register a death, the family must provide a medical certificate of cause of death and/or a statutory declaration by a magistrate to the Civil Registration Office. The data are collated in a registry book and, since 2017, have been entered into an electronic death registration database. It is currently very difficult to register deaths in the provinces due to the inaccessibility of registration service points. The MoHA has, however, established a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the MoHMS, which enables the MoHMS to electronically share records of deaths captured within the HIS with the Civil Registration Office. Under the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative, a deaths Tracker database has been established on the District Health Information System (DHIS)-2 electronic platform, which records all medically certified or nurse-notified deaths, including deaths in health facilities and community deaths. This database incorporates cause of death information where known. Death notification forms are physically sent to the central HIS office in Honiara for digitisation on this database. These data can now be manually shared with the Civil Registration Office, and electronic transfer mechanisms are being developed. The inter-ministerial MOU also facilitates the transfer of death certificates from the national Civil Registration Office back to health facilities. In order to register events that occur outside health facilities, the MoHA and MoHMS are exploring relationships with faith-based organisations and cemeteries (Kamoriki et al. 2020). Death registration is both electronic (records are entered into a commercial electronic database referred to as Promadis) and paper-based.

Timeframes and costs

The law states that registration of deaths is required in principle, but there are no timeframes established by law. Death registration and issuance of a death certificate are free within five years of the death, after which SBD 10.00 is charged for both registration and issuance of a certificate.

COLLATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF CAUSE OF DEATH

Process for coding death certificates

Solomon Islands has made significant improvements in the quality of certification of cause of death data. Two health information officers are primarily responsible for the coding of all causes of death; these officers are responsible for both morbidity and mortality coding. Coding is done at the National Referral Hospital and national HIS Office, according to ICD-10. Coded deaths are entered into the national deaths Tracker database on DHIS-2.

With the support of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative, the country has also rolled out an automated, digital tablet-based verbal autopsy programme through MoHMS, for the collection of both fact of death and cause of death for those who die at home or in the community, away from health facilities, as well as for deaths on/by arrival at health facilities. Verbal autopsies are a formal interview following a death with the family or others who may have known the deceased person. Trained nurse interviewers conduct verbal autopsies in each health zone. Verbal autopsy data are uploaded to a national server for cause of death analysis. This has recently begun to be used for national health planning (Hart et al. 2021).
Training and resources for cause of death certification and coding

With the support of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative, medical doctors have recently been routinely trained at both national and provincial hospitals, and master trainers at the National Referral Hospital are now equipped to provide regular training for interns, residents and registrars. In December 2018, four medical doctors from Solomon Islands travelled to Tonga to participate in a three-day regional training workshop on medical certification of cause of death. The workshop was coordinated by SPC and supported by Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) partners. The Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative has trained six coders in ICD-10 coding, with two of these coders conducting the bulk of the coding work, and the others providing support, supervision or backup services.

COMPLETENESS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION DATA

Further investigation is needed to understand and more accurately estimate the completeness of the civil registry in Solomon Islands, due to large variability in the figures for births and deaths for some years. Table 1 indicates that 86 births that occurred in 2010 were registered, whilst for 2014 almost 15,000 births were registered. Figures from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services show that, between 2012 and 2018, the number of births recorded in the health system remained steady, around 15,000 to 17,000 each year. The SPC projection estimated that just over 20,000 births would have occurred in Solomon Islands in 2018. Because of the large variability in the figures for births registered in the civil registry, the estimated completeness, when compared to health, ranges from the lowest level of 3% in 2012, up to the highest level of 88% in 2014, and then around 70% from 2016 to 2018. Comparison with the SPC projection of births for 2018 shows an estimated completeness of around 55%.

The completeness of birth registration in Solomon Islands has also been estimated by periodic population sample surveys which ask the mother or caregiver of children aged under five years whether their child's birth has been registered with a civil authority, and may also ask if their child possesses a birth certificate. The 2015 Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) reported that the birth registration system in Solomon Islands requires considerable quality control checks to improve proper recording and maintenance. The DHS outlined that whilst coverage is good in some provinces, in others more efforts are needed to improve birth registration (NSO, MOHMS and SPC 2017). Based on the 4,132 children aged under five years included in the 2015 Solomon Islands DHS, 88% were reported to have had their births registered, and 26.2% were reported to possess a birth certificate (NSO, MOHMS and SPC 2017). This is an improvement from the 2006/2007 Solomon Islands DHS, when 79.8% of the 2,677 children aged below 5 years included in the survey were reported to have their births registered (NSO, SPC and Macro Inc 2009).

Table 1. Completeness of birth registration data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Civil Registrya</th>
<th>Healthb</th>
<th>SPC projectionc</th>
<th>Censusd</th>
<th>Compared with health</th>
<th>Compared with SPC</th>
<th>Compared with census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>11,445</td>
<td>16,815</td>
<td>20,640</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>11,848</td>
<td>16,440</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>11,535</td>
<td>17,770</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>5,290</td>
<td>17,656</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>14,823</td>
<td>16,920</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>15,842</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>14,931</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: aObtained directly from the Ministry of Home Affairs on 7.06.2021. bObtained directly from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services on 12.11.2020. Figures represent the total number of births reported in the DHIS2 system each year. cCalculated from 2018 crude birth rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). dThe most recent published census was the 2009 census; in November 2020 provisional population figures only were published from the 2019 census (NSO 2020). Completeness was calculated by dividing 'Civil Registry' by 'Health', and 'Civil Registry' by 'SPC projection'.
In general, deaths in Solomon Islands have historically not been recorded well. There is very low demand for death certificates. Since places of burial are not regulated, most deaths, especially in the provinces, go unregistered. Table 2 shows that, during 2010–2015, less than 100 of the deaths that occurred each year were registered. This has steadily increased in recent years, with 705 deaths registered in 2016, 1,348 in 2017 and 1,833 in 2018. Figures from the MoHMS show that, between 2012 and 2018, the number of deaths recorded in the health system varied between 1,000 and 2,000 each year. The SPC projection estimated that around 3,500 deaths would have occurred in Solomon Islands in 2018. The estimated completeness of the civil registry, when compared to health, should be interpreted with caution, as it is likely that both sources underestimate the actual number of deaths that occur in Solomon Islands each year.

Table 2 also shows that the completeness was less than 5% between 2012 and 2015 and then steadily rose until 2018, when it was 93%, although this figure is probably an overestimation. Comparison with the SPC projection for 2018 shows an estimated completeness of around 55%.

**Table 2. Completeness of death registration data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Civil Registry</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>SPC projection</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>Compared with health</th>
<th>Compared with SPC</th>
<th>Compared with census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,883</td>
<td>2,033</td>
<td>3,542</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>2,062</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1,770</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1,703</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1,293</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: * Obtained directly from the Ministry of Home Affairs on 7.06.2021. * Obtained directly from the Ministry of Health on 12.11.2020. Figures represent the total number of deaths reported in the DHIS2 system each year. * Calculated from 2018 crude death rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). * The most recent published census was the 2009 census; in November 2020 provisional population figures only were published from the 2019 census (NSO 2020). Completeness was calculated by dividing 'Civil Registry' by ‘Health’, and ‘Civil Registry’ by ‘SPC projection’.

**PUBLICATION OF CRVS DATA AND REPORTS**

The Solomon Islands Bureau of Statistics has an important role in producing vital statistics to inform policy development and to ensure that the data needs under the Solomon Islands National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and the National Development Plan more broadly, are met. This role will become increasingly important as the completeness of birth and death data improves, making it possible to generate nationally representative data from these collections.

**RECENT INITIATIVES AND PLANS TO STRENGTHEN CRVS**

1. A key challenge to civil registration in Solomon Islands is the topography (the population is sparsely spread over multiple islands) and the lack of adequate infrastructure to reach the very rural and remote population. The government is working on addressing this challenge through establishing and strengthening the data-sharing relationship between MoHA and the MoHMS (whose infrastructure has a wider coverage) and with faith-based organisations, which have timely information on the occurrence of events at the community level. In Honiara, where burials are regulated, a cemetery-based notification system has been established to identify community deaths.

2. The revision of civil registration legislation, which is currently ongoing, is envisaged to bring about significant improvements in the performance of registration systems. This includes: (i) streamlining registration
processes; (ii) formalising a data sharing arrangement between MoHA and the MoHMS; (iii) aligning various components of the legislation to international human rights provisions; (iv) improving the demand for civil registration documents (birth and death certificates) by regulating the use of statutory declarations, which have, over time, replaced the need for civil registration documents; (v) establishing provisions for data protection; and (vi) facilitating better resourcing for the civil registration system.

3. In December 2018, four medical doctors from Solomon Islands travelled to Tonga to participate in a three-day regional training workshop on medical certification of cause of death. The workshop was coordinated by SPC and supported by BAG partners.

4. Establishment of a DHIS-2 deaths database for consolidation of deaths reported through the HIS.

5. Establishment of an automated verbal autopsy system – the world’s first nationwide deployment of such a system.

REFERENCES


Pacific Community. 2018b. Population estimates and projections. Available at: https://sdd.spc.int/topic/population-estimates-and-projections