

CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS IN FIJI

Fiji comprises more than 330 islands and is surrounded by Vanuatu to the west, Tuvalu to the north, Wallis and Futuna to the northeast, Tonga to the southeast and New Zealand to the south.



Land area
(km²)
18,333

2020 mid-year
population estimate
895,000

Population growth
rate (%)
0.4

OVERVIEW

This civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) country profile for Fiji 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 Fiji. 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 Fiji is governed by the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act of 1975.

Agencies responsible for birth and death recording and registration

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) 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 Research, Innovation and Digital Analysis Management (RIDAM) Unit located in Suva. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for, inter alia, overseeing the civil registration of births and deaths, with the national Fiji Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) Office located in Suva, and a further 20 BDM offices across Fiji.

National CRVS committee and CRVS action plan

Fiji has a CRVS Committee, comprised of the Ministry of Justice BDM Office; the Ministry of Health and Medical Services; the Fiji Bureau of Statistics; the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the Ministry of Education; iTaukei Affairs; the Ministry of Communications; and the Fiji Police Force. A CRVS assessment was conducted and a CRVS action plan formulated by the Committee in 2019–2020, with the assistance of SPC and the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) partners. Since 2014, the Fijian government, through the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, has led regional advocacy initiatives for CRVS in the Asia-Pacific region while serving as chair of the Regional Steering Group for CRVS.

National ID systems

Fiji currently does not have a national ID system.

REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS

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

When a live birth occurs in a health facility a Notification of Birth (NOB) form is issued, outlining the birth information and details of the child and mother. The NOB may be an A4 printed form generated after information is entered into the Patient Information System (PATIS Plus) at eight divisional and sub-divisional hospitals that are currently online (where $\geq 90\%$ of births occur); or a handwritten A5 NOB form completed by the hospital, health centre or nursing station. The handwritten A5 NOB has four copies, one of which is sent directly to the RIDAM Unit. Every delivery goes into a hard copy ledger book in the birthing unit so they can be reconciled to ensure that all births have been counted and reported to the RIDAM Unit through consolidated monthly reporting information system (CMRIS) reports. The hard copy ledger book also allows for completion of reporting if the PATIS Plus electronic system is not functioning. The RIDAM Unit conducts quarterly visits to do quality checks of the data reported via CMRIS, including reconciling the number of births reported via CMRIS against the hard copy registers from the birthing units. For births that occur in the community, the practice is for the baby and mother to be taken to the nearest health facility to be assessed by a medical team. A NOB is issued by the health facility.

The Colonial War Memorial Hospital (CWM) in Suva was the pilot site for electronic sharing of birth data with the civil registry (BDM) in 1996. The CWM hospital NOB information is directly entered into the BDM with the assistance of the parents/guardians. The system for the other seven hospitals connected to PATIS Plus is different; NOB information is automatically transferred to the BDM Office when it is entered. For births that occur in the eight hospitals that are electronically linked with the BDM Office, the informant registers the birth by presenting to the BDM Office with an A4 printout of the NOB. The BDM customer service officer can retrieve the electronic record and needs to complete only a small number of fields. For births that occur in areas not electronically connected to the BDM, the informant presents with the A5 paper NOB and this is used to register the birth.

In April 2019, the government launched a birth registration mobile application called e-Services, under the “digitalFIJI” application, which enables the public to register births online. This process involves downloading the birth registration application, following instructions on the screen, and submission of the registration electronically. Parents or informants still need to present themselves physically to the BDM Office to collect the birth certificate. The normal fee for a copy of the first birth certificate is waived for any birth registration initiated electronically through this application process for a period of two years, with effect from 12 April 2019.

Timeframes and costs

Current legislation stipulates that births should be registered within two months, but a late fee is charged only for birth registration one year or more after the birth. Registrations completed more than one year after the birth have more stringent documentation requirements if there is no notification of birth.

Standard, on-time birth registration	no charge
Late registration (> 1 year)	21.80 (FJD)
Birth certificate printed	10.90 (FJD)*
Change of name	27.25 (FJD)**
Addition of father's particulars	10.90 (FJD)

**The fee for a printed birth certificate is waived for birth registration initiated electronically through the application for a period of two years with effect from 12 April 2019. **FJD16.35 application fee + FJD10.90 for re-print of amended birth certificate.*

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

A birth certificate is required for school enrolment. To obtain a passport the Department of Immigration requires a birth certificate, issued by the BDM Office in the last six months, due to the frequency of name changes and updates to the birth register in Fiji. On 1 August 2018, the government introduced a Parental Assistance Payment Program (PAPP) to assist low-income earners with costs associated with young children born on or after this date. The payment was administered in such a way as to encourage birth registration. PAPP was only payable if a child was registered at the civil registry within 12 months of birth and if the combined annual parental income was less than FJD 30,000. PAPP has been suspended since 1 August 2020.

Registration process for births occurring overseas

The Fiji BDM Office, where all births that occur in Fiji are registered, is not involved in the process of overseas births. The Fiji civil registry does not, therefore, contain any births which occurred overseas. The children of Fijian citizens born overseas can apply for a Fijian passport and Fijian citizenship through the Department of Immigration. The original birth certificate needs to be presented to the Department of Immigration, along with other documents.

REPORTING AND REGISTRATION OF DEATHS

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

When a death occurs at a health facility, a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) is issued by a registered medical practitioner. A copy is provided to the family of the deceased, and the health facility sends another copy straight to the BDM Office. A recent requirement at some hospitals is for the family member of the deceased to provide proof of identification of the deceased, such as their birth certificate. There is currently no electronic system that automatically shares death records with the BDM Office (as there is for births). To register a death, an informant must present at a BDM Office with the MCCD, and information on the place of burial/cremation and other burial details. BDM officers manually enter information from the MCCD, and additional information provided by the informant (with supporting documents), into a death registration system.

Timeframes and costs

Current legislation stipulates that deaths should be registered within seven days, but there is no charge for deaths registered after this period.

Standard, on-time death registration	no charge
Late registration (not applicable)	no charge
Death certificate printed	10.90 (FJD)

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. There are also payments provided by Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) to assist with the funeral expenses of its deceased members. These payments include up to FJD 2,000 for the special death benefit assistance scheme, which requires the deceased member to nominate the recipient before their death; or up to FJD 1,500 for the funeral assistance payment, which the deceased's spouse, parents, siblings or children can apply for after the death. The payments are issued only after presentation of an original or certified copy of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD), stamped and signed by an authorised medical official, or a death certificate from the civil registry (FNPF 2020). The presentation of a death certificate from the civil registry is not a mandatory requirement to receive these funeral assistance payments, as they can be issued after presentation of only an MCCD.

Registration process for deaths occurring overseas

The Fiji BDM Office, where deaths that occur in Fiji are registered, is not involved in processing deaths occurring overseas. The Fiji civil registry does not, therefore, contain any deaths that occurred overseas, but it can update its birth records when the family informs the BDM Office of a death occurring overseas. When inheritance of land, property, and estates of the deceased person need to be managed, the original death certificate needs to be presented to the Department of Immigration, along with several other documents.

COLLATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF CAUSE OF DEATH

Process for coding death certificates

Fiji is the only Pacific Island country that has implemented IRIS, an automatic system for coding multiple causes of death and for selection of the underlying cause of death. IRIS is an automated coding software that allows death certificates to be coded according to ICD-10 (International Classification of Disease 10th revision) rules and standards. Manual coding by trained coders is still required for deaths that cannot be processed automatically through IRIS.

Training and resources for cause of death certification and coding

In December 2018, a medical doctor from Fiji travelled to Tonga to participate in a three-day regional training workshop on medical certification of cause of death, coordinated by SPC and supported by the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) partners. In 2017, medical doctors and Health Information Planning personnel from Fiji attended a similar training workshop on medical certification of cause of death in Nadi, coordinated by SPC and supported by BAG partners. Also in 2017, a mortality coding workshop designed for staff from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services was held in Suva, coordinated by the WHO Division of Pacific Technical Support. The workshop introduced participants to ICD-10 and the mortality coding rules; manual coding of hard copies of death certificates; and automated coding using IRIS and strategies for managing rejects from the system. Over the past several years, Queensland University of Technology and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (both BAG partners) have provided ad hoc mortality coding assistance to Fiji, both in-country and remotely, when requested.

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. When estimating completeness, it is best that overseas births and deaths are not included in the civil registry figures, since the other sources they are

compared to, such as health records, do not include overseas events. In Fiji, overseas births and deaths are not registered in the civil registry, and therefore are not included in the figures in Tables 1 and 2. Please see the sections above on registration of births and deaths occurring overseas for more information about the processes in Fiji.

Table 1 shows that, between 2012 and 2017, the completeness of birth registration when compared to health records remained around 90% or higher until 2015, after which it declined to 81% in 2016 and 71% in 2017. A probable explanation for this decline is late birth registrations, which will likely increase as children near school age and are required to present their birth certificate for enrolment. Comparison with the 2017 Fiji census is not possible, as the census did not ask questions on the annual number of births, and civil registry figures for 2018 were not available to make a comparison with the SPC projection.

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	-	-	16,328	-	-	-	-
2017	14,023	19,646	-	-	71%	-	-
2016	15,620	19,180	-	-	81%	-	-
2015	17,882	20,510	-	-	87%	-	-
2014	18,232	20,249	-	-	90%	-	-
2013	20,682	20,970	-	-	99%	-	-
2012	20,447	20,178	-	-	101%	-	-
2011	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2010	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: ^aBirths, Deaths and Marriages Registry (FBoS, CRO, MHMS 2019). ^bHealth Information Unit (FBoS, CRO, MHMS 2019). ^cCalculated from 2018 crude birth rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). ^dThe 2017 census did not ask questions on annual births, and therefore could not be used to estimate the completeness of birth registration. Completeness was calculated by dividing «Civil Registry» by «Health».

Table 2 shows that the completeness of death registration when compared to health records was around 67% in 2015 and rose to around 85% in 2016–2017. Comparison with the 2017 census is not possible, as the census did not ask questions on annual all-age mortality, and civil registry figures for 2018 were not available to make a comparison with the SPC projection.

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	-	-	7,227	-	-	-	-
2017	5,638	6,992	-	-	81%	-	-
2016	6,550	7,476	-	-	88%	-	-
2015	4,739	7,038	-	-	67%	-	-
2014	5,100		-	-	-	-	-
2013	6,033		-	-	-	-	-
2012	4,931		-	-	-	-	-
2011	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2010	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: ^aBirths, Deaths and Marriages Registry (FBoS, CRO, MHMS 2019). ^bHealth Information Unit (FBoS, CRO, MHMS 2019). ^cCalculated from 2018 crude death rate (Pacific Community 2018a) and 2018 population projection (Pacific Community 2018b). ^dThe 2017 census did not ask questions on all-age mortality, and therefore could not be used to estimate the completeness of death registration. Completeness was calculated by dividing «Civil Registry» by «Health» and «Civil Registry» by «SPC projection».

PUBLICATION OF CRVS DATA AND REPORTS

The Fiji Bureau of Statistics routinely uses civil registration data to complement its other data sources for its vital statistics releases. In 2019, the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, in collaboration with the Civil Registration Office (CRO) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), produced a comprehensive vital statistics report covering 2012 to 2017. The report provides birth and death completeness estimates and key fertility and mortality indicators, and is based on civil registration data for births and health data for deaths (FBoS, CRO, MHMS 2019).

RECENT INITIATIVES AND PLANS TO STRENGTHEN CRVS

1. In April 2019, the government launched a birth registration mobile application called e-Services under the digitalFiji application. It enables the public to register births online.
2. On 1 August 2018, the Fiji government introduced a Parental Assistance Payment Program (PAPP) to assist low-income earners with costs associated with young children born on or after this date. The payment was administered in such a way as to encourage birth registration. PAPP was only payable if a child was registered at the civil registry within 12 months of birth, and if the combined annual parental income was less than FJD 30,000. PAPP has been suspended since 1 August 2020.
3. In an effort to improve access to registration services, the government has opened several new BDM offices, especially in remote areas.
4. In December 2018, a medical doctor from Fiji 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.
5. In May 2018, Fiji hosted and participated in a two-week regional training workshop on CRVS data analysis and report writing. The workshop was coordinated by SPC and supported by BAG partners.

REFERENCES

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