



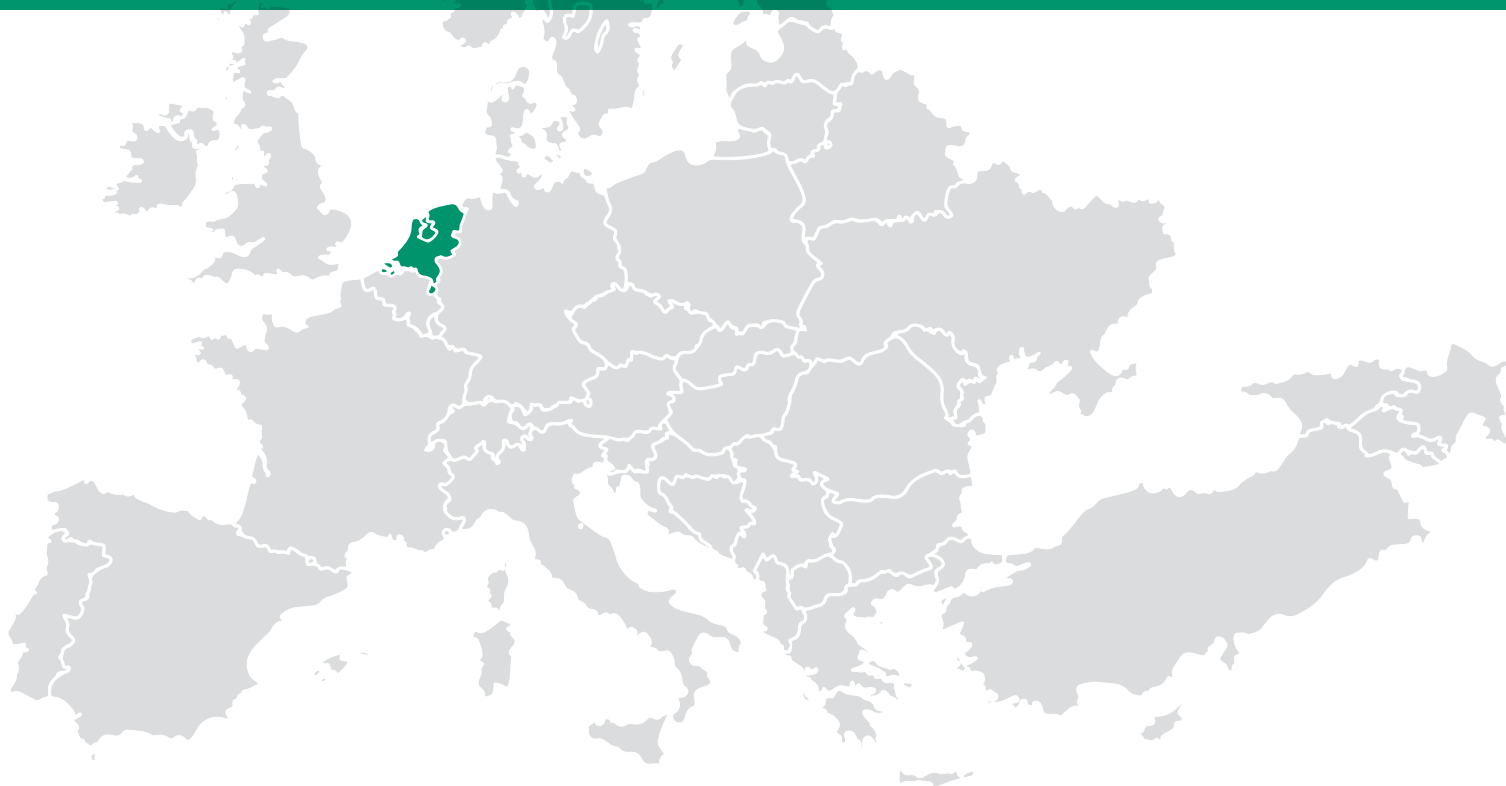
**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**  
for CRVS Systems

**LE CENTRE D'EXCELLENCE**  
sur les systèmes ESEC

# SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

# THE NETHERLANDS



## Program information

### About the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems is a global knowledge and resource hub that actively supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale-up CRVS systems. It collaborates with organizations and experts to broker access to information and expertise, including global standards, tools, research evidence, and relevant good practice.

The Centre of Excellence was established with funding from Global Affairs Canada and IDRC and contributes directly to the work of the Global Financing Facility, a key financing platform of the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in the Netherlands.

The information is based on a case study of the Netherlands' CRVS and identity management system published in the *Compendium of Good Practices in Linking Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) and Identity Management Systems*. It was further supplemented by a desk review of available documents. Among other things, the report presents:

- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes;
- Stakeholder activities; and
- Resources available and needed to strengthen CRVS systems.

## Brief country profile

The Netherlands is located in Western Europe. It is bordered by the North Sea to the north and west, Germany to the east, and Belgium to the south. The country also shares maritime borders with France (in the Caribbean) and the United Kingdom.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands consists of four autonomous countries: the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten. The country of the Netherlands consists of a territory in Europe and the islands of Bonaire, Saba, and Sint Eustatius in the Caribbean. The Netherlands' territory in Europe consists of 12 provinces, which are further subdivided into 355 municipalities.

The Netherlands



*Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*

- Land area: 41,500 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population: 17,231,017 (estimated),<sup>1</sup> with an estimated annual growth rate 0.6 percent.<sup>2</sup> In 2018,<sup>3</sup> 91 percent of the population resided in urban areas, with the remaining 9 percent residing in rural areas.
- Capital city: Amsterdam
- Official working language: Dutch
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of Justice and Security
- Civil registration agency: Municipal authorities
- National statistical office: Statistics Netherlands



## CRVS dimensions

Births	
Completeness of birth registration	100% (2017) <sup>4</sup>
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	100% (2017) <sup>5</sup>
Births attended by skilled health personnel	100% (2003) <sup>6</sup>
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	Not available
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds	97% (2018) <sup>7</sup>
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	9.8 (2019) <sup>8</sup>
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	1.7 (2017) <sup>9</sup>
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	4 (2017) <sup>10</sup>
Population under age 15	17% (2012) <sup>11</sup>
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	100% (2011) <sup>12</sup>
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	9 (2017) <sup>13</sup>
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	3.3 (2018) <sup>14</sup>
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	3.9 (2018) <sup>15</sup>
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	5 (2017) <sup>16</sup>
Marriages and divorces	
Marriage registration rate	3.7 (2018) <sup>17</sup>
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	Not available
Divorce registration rate	9.9 (2016) <sup>18</sup>
Vital statistics including causes of death data	
Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	Available
Medically certified causes of death	Available

## Civil registration system

### Legislative framework

Under the Civil Code, vital event registration records are completed and stored in the municipality in which the vital events occurred. There is a designated Registrar of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Registered Partnerships in each of the Netherlands' 355 municipalities. The Registrar is responsible for creating, processing, and retaining vital event registrations.

The *Basic Registration of Persons Act*<sup>19</sup> regulates entry and processing of personal information in population registers. It also defines the characteristics and components of the population register system. The details of the system are further prescribed in regulations at the ministerial level. These regulations guarantee that all municipalities apply the *Basic Registration of Persons Act* rules in a similar way.

In addition to registering residents' legal identity information and any legal identity data layers throughout a person's lifetime, the population register's key purpose is to keep up-to-date information on a person's address of residence. Dutch government officials rely on address of residence information to determine tax responsibilities and to provide health, education, social security, and welfare services.

The *Basic Registration of Persons Act* defines two types of population registers: one for residents and one for non-residents. Resident population registers are maintained in each municipality for people who live within its territory. Non-resident population registers are maintained by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Ministry of the Interior) for Dutch citizens who live abroad and for non-Dutch citizens, such as migrant workers and students who reside in the Netherlands for a short period of time.

Privacy protection legislation provides general guidance on the conditions for sharing information from the central population register with other public administrators and service providers. Only services under government authority can legally benefit from access to the central population register. To gain access to specific personal information in the population register, the requesting authority must prove that their service is defined by relevant sectoral law and that the service requires the use of personal data. A dedicated review board set up by the National Office for Identity Data assesses the merits of each request and defines the types of personal data that are required for service provision, in consultation with the requesting authority. Data can be shared by copying personal data into a service's designated functional register or by looking up the personal information directly in the population register when a request for service is made. Each decision to grant access to the population register for a specific purpose is published on the Ministry of the Interior's website.

Privacy legislation requires that the Ministry of the Interior log each request for personal information made by external users and public authorities. Citizens have the right to access information on the agencies that have used their personal information, and for what purpose, within a specific timeframe.

According to privacy legislation, Dutch citizens have the right to

- inspect the data recorded about them;
- have data corrected, if incorrect; and
- know which organizations have used their data, when, and for what purpose.



## Management, organization, and operations

Under the Civil Code, the Ministry of Justice and Security is responsible for coordinating and creating policies for the civil registration process in the Netherlands, while individual municipalities are responsible for registering vital events and maintaining records. Information from each registration record is entered in the population register of the municipality where the person maintains permanent residence.

When people move away from a specific municipality to live abroad, their records are transferred to the non-residents' population register, which is operated by the Ministry of the Interior.

All six Dutch Caribbean islands make use of the Persoonsinformatievoorziening Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba<sup>20</sup> system, or the population information system for the [former] Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The islands of Bonaire, Saba, and Sint Eustatius are recognized in the population registration system as specific Dutch municipalities. Their population information systems are synchronized with the Basisregistratie Personen (BRP), or Personal Records Database, to prevent duplicate enrolment. As independent countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten maintain their own population registers, which are not connected to the BRP.

The *Basic Registration of Persons Act* appoints the Ministry of the Interior to maintain a central population register that aggregates and synchronizes all personal records daily with 355 municipal residents' population registers and the non-residents' population register.

The National Office for Identity Data is responsible for overseeing the data-sharing process and resolving any issues related to data quality. Table 1 details responsibilities and tasks.

**Table 1: CRVS responsibilities and tasks.**

Responsible organization	Task
Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations	Policy and law, travel document regulations, population registry
National Office for Identity Data under the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations	Administrative office, travel document system management, population registry
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies	Passports for Dutch citizens living abroad
Ministry of Justice and Security	Policy and law, regulations civil registry, registrations of foreigners without permits
Municipalities	Front office identification, travel documents, civil and population registry

## *National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms*

There is no coordination mechanism specifically targeting CRVS systems. However, the Consultative Council is the coordinating body responsible for financing and supporting the operation of the population register, which hosts civil registration records and provides proof of registered vital events.

The Consultative Council includes six representatives from the Ministry of the Interior: three municipal representatives, three officials from municipal and non-municipal agencies that supply the Ministry with data about non-residents, and six representatives from agencies that use population data.

One of the most important tasks of the Consultative Council is to determine the amount of financial contributions required to support the operation of the central population register. Contributions cover the operational and human resource costs required to maintain and operate the register.

According to Dutch law, the amount of information an agency acquires from the population register will determine its level of financial contribution. Contributions are directly proportional to the volume of information obtained from the central population register.

Statistics Netherlands falls under the sector named Statistics Netherlands and other agencies. Other members of this sector include:

- Netherlands' Cadastre, Land Registry and Mapping Agency;
- 12 Netherlands provinces;
- Chamber of Commerce; and
- Royal Dutch Association of Civil Law Notaries.

Statistics Netherlands represents this sector in the Consultative Council.

### ***Accessibility of civil registration services***

No precise data available

### ***Registration of vital events***

Every child born in the Netherlands must be registered at the municipal population affairs office within three days of their birth. If parents miss this deadline, they may register the birth only by court decision. The registration act (record) is created after one of the child's parents or someone who was present at the birth provides a parent identity document and a statement of the general practitioner or midwife with their request. The completed registration is recorded in a designated registration book.

If a birth or other vital event occurs in the same municipality where the person lives, the registration information is entered directly into the municipal population register to create a new personal record for the child. If the vital event occurs in a different municipality, the registration will be recorded in the registration book at the municipality in which the vital event took place. An electronic notification

is sent to the person's municipality of residence, where a personal record is updated or, in the case of a newborn child, a personal record is created in the population register. When parents register a birth, their identity information is automatically updated from the central population register and added to their child's personal record.

The Registrar of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Registered Partnerships is responsible for creating birth registration records, which are legal proof of a child's birth. The birth certificate is filed in the birth registration book and a copy is provided only if requested, for a fee. Population registration in the Netherlands has made online verification of identity information beneficial to the Dutch government and its citizens. Over time, the population register has eliminated the need for birth certificates from all government communications.

Declarants report a person's death to the municipality where the death has occurred. In the case of a death by natural causes, the doctor in attendance will provide the declarant with A and B certificates. The A certificate is the death certificate and the B certificate (cause of death certificate) is for Statistics Netherlands. These certificates are used to report the death and cause of death to the municipality where the death has occurred. When the death has been registered, the municipality issues a death registration certificate and updates the personal file of the deceased in the respective municipal population registers.

Registering marriages, registered partnerships, and divorces that take place within the Netherlands can involve authorities at the local, ministerial, or judicial level. Following the same approach, registration records remain with the authorities that registered the event. Information about the event is communicated to the person's municipality of residence to update that population register.





## Sample registration forms

- Birth certificate [d2vgipibika81v.cloudfront.net/uploads/sites/148/2017/04/DutchBirthCert.pdf](https://d2vgipibika81v.cloudfront.net/uploads/sites/148/2017/04/DutchBirthCert.pdf)
- Death certificate [d2vgipibika81v.cloudfront.net/uploads/sites/148/Document-C-Death-Certificate.jpg](https://d2vgipibika81v.cloudfront.net/uploads/sites/148/Document-C-Death-Certificate.jpg)

## Vital statistics system

### Vital statistics

Following the established procedure for granting access to a specific set of personal data in the population register, Statistics Netherlands has been authorized to receive all data required to compile population statistics, including vital statistics. This is in line with requirements and standards from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Eurostat, and the Council of Europe. To compile vital statistics, Statistics Netherlands has acquired several types of authorization that collect information by triggering the release of personal information to Statistics Netherlands when a new vital event is recorded, such as date of birth or date of death. Data on marriages and divorces is obtained in a similar fashion.

Access to specific data is approved once it has been deemed that it is necessary to produce specific statistical analysis and that the amount of data being shared is consistent with the amount required. Data sharing with Statistics Netherlands is achieved by subscribing the agency to authorized data types. Registering new information in the subscribed data type also triggers an electronic message communicating new information to Statistics Netherlands.

### Causes of death

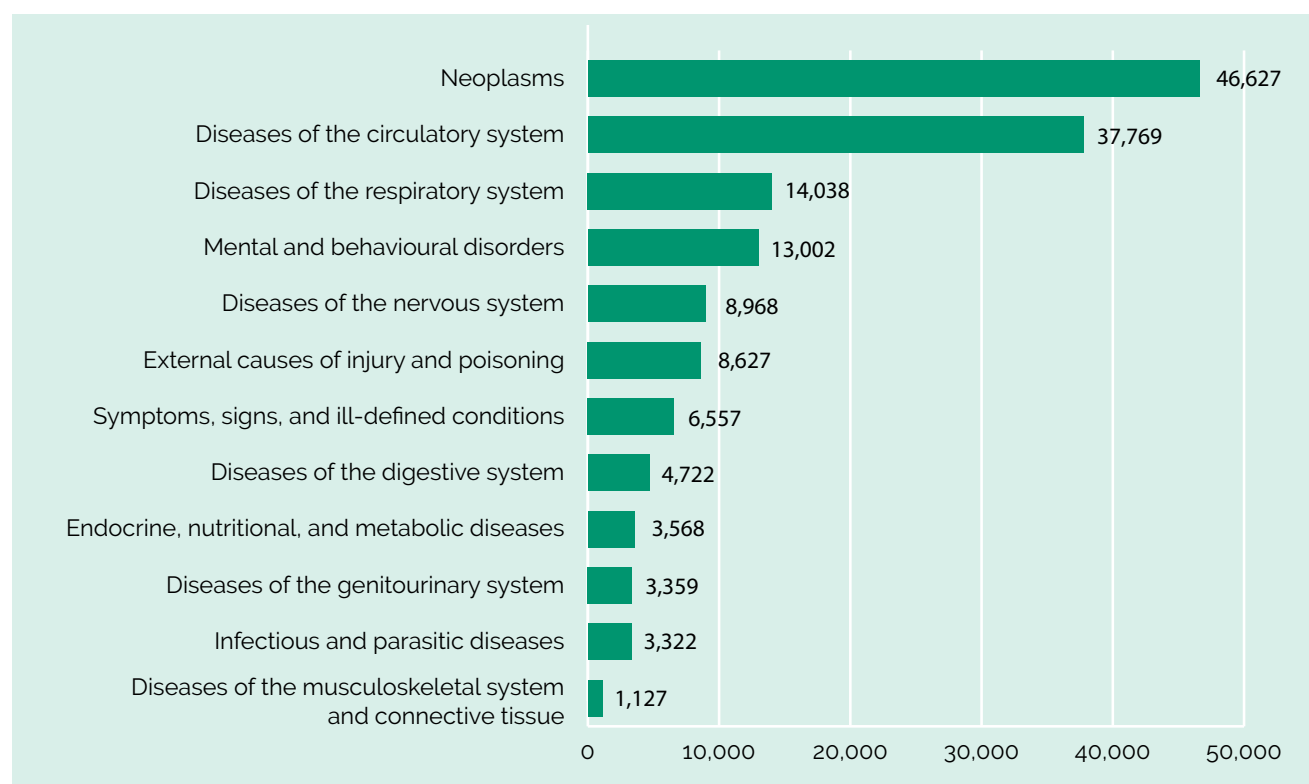
The cause-of-death statistic is a registration based on all causes of death from all deceased persons

registered in the Netherlands (Table 2). This information is based on the compulsory cause-of-death notification by the physician treating the deceased at the time of death or a pathologist. For every death, a cause-of-death certificate is completed and sent with the death certificate to the population register in the municipality in which the death took place. The cause-of-death certificate, which is used exclusively for statistical purposes, is subsequently sent to Statistics Netherlands. Since 2014, cause-of-death certificates are also sent digitally to Statistics Netherlands through a secure connection. World Health Organization guidelines are used where possible to classify and code causes of death. Only the underlying cause of death is reported. Until 2012, coding was done by hand and a maximum of three secondary causes of death were mentioned for each deceased person. Since 2013, coding has been done automatically by IRIS, an automated, interactive mortality coding software system, which codes multiple causes of death and selects the underlying cause of death for statistical tabulation. All underlying diseases are coded on the cause-of-death certificate.

**Table 2: Information collected on causes of death.**

Causes of death information	Information collected	
	Yes	No
Deaths occurring in health facilities	X	
Natural deaths occurring in communities	X	
Non-natural deaths occurring in communities	X	

The most common causes of death were neoplasms, diseases of the circulatory system, and diseases of the respiratory system (Figure 1). By comparison, fatal diseases of the skin and complications during pregnancy and childbirth were not very common.

**Figure 1: Most common causes of death, 2018.**

The two most important causes of death in the Netherlands were the same for both genders, although neoplasms were more common among men, and diseases of the circulatory system were more common among women. However, some causes of death were more common among a certain gender. For example, nearly twice as many women (742) as men (385) died from musculoskeletal diseases.

## Digitization

Digitizing municipal population registers that store information on registered vital events began in the early 1990s. On 1 October 1994, municipal population registers began operating as digitized databases. Digitized registers have since undergone a number of technological and infrastructural changes. Most notably, these include establishing a central population register, the BRP, which is administered by the Ministry of the Interior. The BRP retains copies of all personal

data collected by municipal population registers. It also provides access to personal data to all other public administrators.

## Computerization

The National Office for Identity Data defines the technical and software requirements for implementing municipal population registers. It monitors externally procured information and communications technology (ICT) solutions and ensures that they meet the necessary requirements and standards. The Office also defines standards and protocols for application programming interfaces to allow external users to access the central register.

### *Online registration services at health facilities*

No registration takes place at health facilities.

### *Mobile technology application*

Mobile technology is not used for civil registration processes.

### *Unique identification number*

The unique identification number (branded as the citizen service number) is designed as a random number that can be mathematically verified as a valid number, but does not contain personal information that can be attributed to the person. UINs are generated by the National Office for Identity Data and distributed to municipalities in batches of 500 UINs to be allocated locally.

### **Population register**

Each municipal population register contains personal records that include a person's identity and address, as well as a range of other personal information to facilitate decision-making on their eligibility for various services and rights. Personal records in a municipal population register consist of specific categories of personal information.

The information in the population register is either supplied by relevant authorities or concerned individuals. Local municipal registrars supply information on births, deaths, marriages, and registered partnerships. Similarly, courts supply information on divorces, and the Ministry of Justice provides information on changes in citizenship. Finally, concerned individuals are required to personally report to municipal authorities when moving residence within the country, immigrating or moving abroad, or recording any vital events that happened abroad. While residents generally report vital events in a timely manner, they may face a fine of 325 euros (approximately US\$359) if they deliberately fail to report a new vital event of residency status.

The Personal Records Database is the Dutch central population register. It is designed as a database that mirrors all personal records from 355 municipal population registers and the register of non-residents. Each municipal population register connects to the central population register at least once daily to synchronize its content with its municipal counterpart.

The primary role of the central register is to allow data users to access information in all municipal population registers from a single location. The National Office for Identity Data controls the quality of registrations stored in the municipal population register to ensure the integrity of the registration process across all municipal population registers. However, it has no authority to change information in the central or municipal registers.

The National Office for Identity Data defines the technical and software requirements for implementing municipal population registers. It monitors externally procured ICT solutions and ensures that they meet the necessary requirements and standards. The Office also defines standards and protocols for application programming interfaces to allow external users to access the central register.

### *Digitization of historical civil registration records*

All civil registration records have been digitized in the process of digitizing municipal population registers. Civil registration certificates are also preserved on microfilm and kept at a central location.

### *Link with identification system*

Municipal authorities are responsible for issuing legal identity credentials such as national identity cards, passports, and driver's licences. Biometric data, such as photos for national ID, passports, and driver's licences, is stored in a separate database kept by the issuing agencies. However, all other personal information printed on these documents is drawn directly from the central population register.

When information is entered into a personal record in a municipal population register that is different from the information on identity credentials or marks a person as deceased, that information is shared via the central population register. The information would generally originate when a

person registers vital life events. This information is shared via the central population register to be marked as invalid with the database that issued the most recent identity credentials.

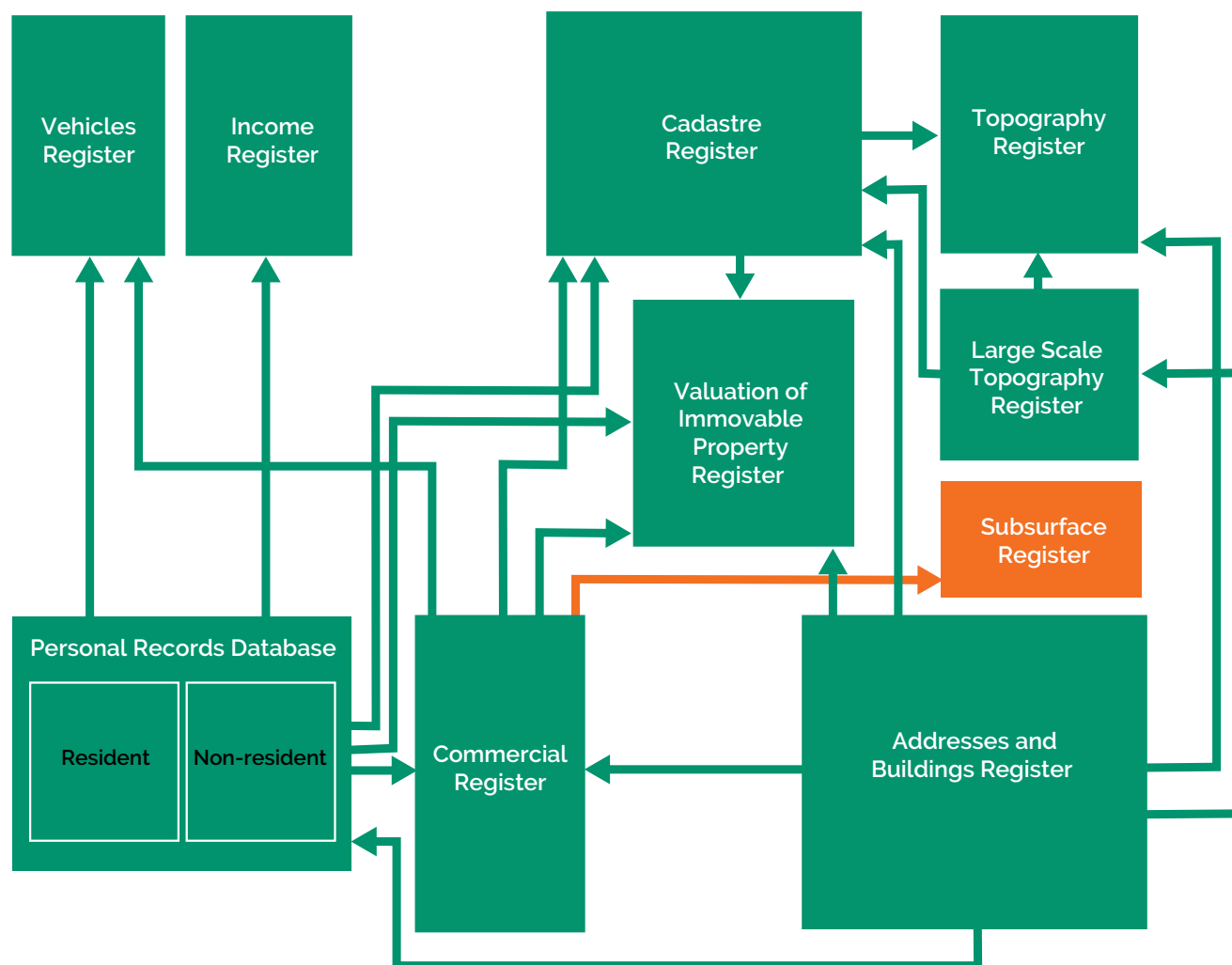
## Interface with other sectors and operations

In the Netherlands, there are 10 separate, fundamental, and interconnected registers that operate on agreed system standards to ensure interoperability between them. The main purpose of the system of basic registers is to allow the Dutch government to collect data only once and retain it in one register. Each time a government

agency requires information, it must retrieve the data from the appropriate basic register. For example, if the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration needs someone's address, it is not permitted to ask the person for the information. The Administration will instead collect the information from the BRP. Legally, citizens must only provide data once, and all government agencies must use the same data.

Figure 2 illustrates how personal information from the central population register is used as a source of personal data for other basic registers, linking directly to 6 out of 10 basic registers.<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 2: Ten basic registers operated by the Netherlands government and the direction of data sharing between individual registers.**



## Improvement initiatives and external support

### Improvement plan and budget

#### *Strategic plan*

The Dutch strategy is focused on improving identity management practices and aims to reduce cost and complexity of e-government services, fight fraud, and increase simplicity for end users. It includes the provision of digital identity credentials to citizens and businesses for electronic authentication to public sector applications with several levels of assurance. It is based on a centralized registration policy relying on a centralized population register.

#### *Budgetary allocations and requirements*

The Netherlands' CRVS and identity management system is financed entirely from government and municipal budgetary resources. Civil registration, which is the responsibility of municipal authorities, is financed from municipal budgets. The central population register, which falls under the authority of the Ministry of Interior Office for Identity Data, draws funds from a range of public institutions that use data from the population register. The Consultative Council determines the participation of each public institution in the funding of the population register.

#### *Activities identified as high priorities*

Given the high demand for verifying registered data from public institutions, the CRVS and identity management system in the Netherlands is frequently targeted for all types of fraud attempts that threaten the integrity of the whole registration system, as most of the verification and data sharing takes place in the digital realm. To that end, measures to identify and combat fraud take high priority. The Office for Identity Data also began modernizing and overhauling the software platform

on which the population register is built. The existing legacy system is increasingly considered unsuitable to adequately use the latest ICT tools.

## Conclusion

Civil registration and vital statistics systems are fundamental to the Netherlands' identity system. Registered vital events are used in the digitized population register and later processed by other government systems. While civil registration paper records are still meticulously kept and preserved, they are used only as a "golden reserve of identity information" for situations where identity information cannot be accessed digitally. Municipal population registers in the Netherlands have traditionally reflected a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics, and identity management. Each new layer of identity information from birth until death is recorded in the population register using information on registered vital events. This information is used as a source of identity data to issue ID documents and update identity data in other government functional systems. The Netherlands' identity system demonstrates a deeply rooted understanding of how interactions between public authorities and citizens can be supported by a robust system that recognizes, registers, and manages identity information. It further illustrates how a government's overall efficiency depends on access to readily available, up-to-date identity information, including address of residence.

## Resources

### Websites

The National Office for Identity Data:

[rvig.nl/about-rvig](http://rvig.nl/about-rvig)

Ministry of Justice and Security: [government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-justice-and-security](http://government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-justice-and-security)

Statistics Netherlands: [cbs.nl/en-gb](http://cbs.nl/en-gb)

### Additional materials

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