



2020 Decade Census

The Republic of Panama shows progress in the prevention of statelessness. The XII National Population Census and VIII Housing Census, carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Census, have allowed for estimating and characterizing people at risk of statelessness and their distribution in the territory.


These data were collected between January 8 and March 4, 2023. It was a *de jure* census, so those not at home could be revisited within two months of registration. Over 1 million households were visited, and 4,064,780 people were censused.

Key questions



Is the person registered in the civil registry?

In the Civil Registry of Panama	 Is not registered	 Not declared
In the Civil Registry of another country		
In both		

Of which country are they citizens?

Of this country (Panama)	 None	 Not declared
Of another country		
Both		

Where was the mother living when they were born?

In this same inhabited place or neighborhood	 In another country	 Not declared
In another inhabited place or neighborhood		

Preventive policies

The Constitution of Panama of 1972, and since 1904, grants nationality by *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*. This is its primary safeguard to prevent statelessness. All people born in Panama have the automatic right to Panamanian nationality, as well as the children of Panamanian men and women born abroad.

People **born in Panama** benefit from a **special registration procedure** before the Civil Registry if they *self-identify as indigenous*, thanks to Law 31 of 2006. This allows access to late birth registration if the person meets testimonial and documentary requirements.

This policy could protect **3 out of every 4 people** at risk of statelessness. According to the Census, 21,501 people are at risk of statelessness, of whom 95% reside in indigenous territories and border provinces.

Results

28,703 people censused stated they do not have: **birth records or citizenship of any State** representing **0.7%** of the total country's population

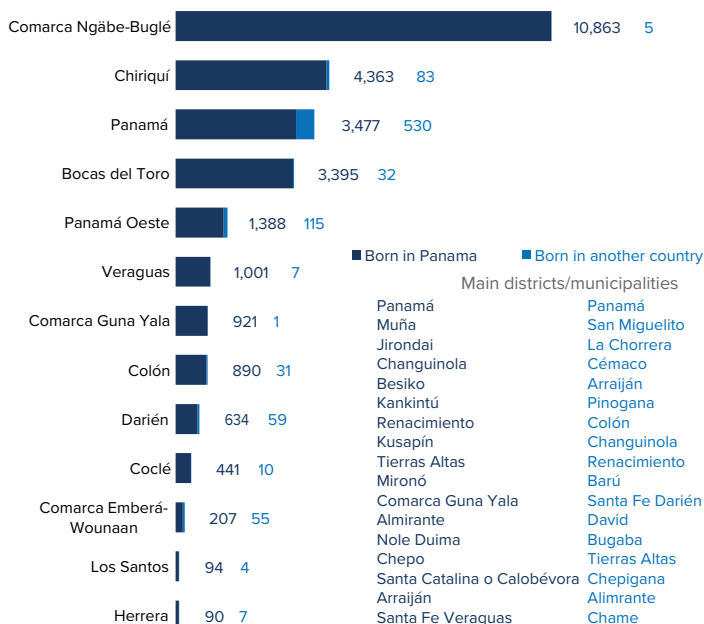
97% stated they were born in the Rep. of Panama (27,764 people)

75% (21,501) self-identify as indigenous, mainly Ngäbe y Guna

25% (6,261) do not self-identify as indigenous

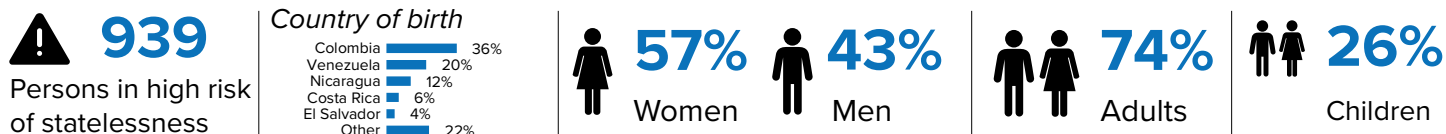
3% stated they were foreign-born (939 people), mainly within Latin America (89%), and the rest in North America (4%), Asia (4%), Europe (2%), the Middle East (0.7%), non-Hispanic Antilles (0.6%), and Oceania (0.1%)

Persons in risk of statelessness by province and indigenous territory

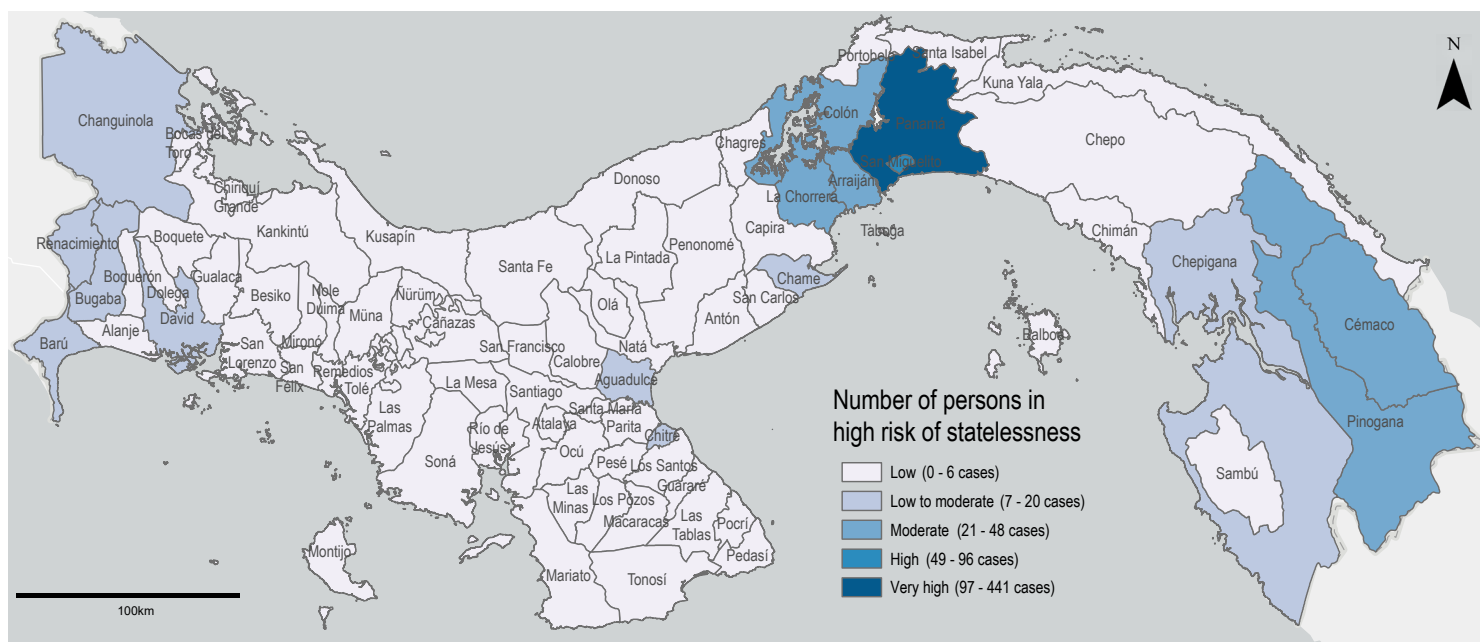


Who is at a higher risk of statelessness in Panama?

UNHCR identifies foreign-born people who do not have a birth record or citizenship as people at high risk of statelessness (939 people), representing 0.02% of the total country's total population.



Geographic distribution



Progress and opportunities

Panama is signatory to the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons since 2011. In 2019, the country regulated its adherence to the Convention into Law, initiating processes to prevent, protect and recognize stateless persons born in Panama or elsewhere. The State coordination is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with various public entities and with the advice of the United Nations through UNHCR.

Panama and Costa Rica continuously collaborate to prevent statelessness, focusing on the Ngäbe indigenous population that works seasonally in both countries. Additionally, Panama's response in recent years has been especially agile, aimed at registering births in its territory, of boys and girls whose parents, refugees and migrants from dozens of countries enter through the Darién jungle, usually in brief transit. This action has prevented some 50 children from being at risk of statelessness, with only 15 birth registrations in 2023.

In 2023, the National Migration Service granted migratory status to 95 people identified as stateless. Also, in 2023, the Ministry of Labor began issuing work permits to people with stateless status, guaranteeing their fundamental rights. In February 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognized two women and one man from Darién and Chepo as stateless; previously, the only other recognition occurred in 2021.

With this census, Panama has better quantitative data that will allow the country to further protect even more people at risk; and, with it, manages to have undertaken each of the ten actions of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014-2024.

UNHCR Multi Country Office for Belize, Cuba, Panama and South Caribbean

Sources: [Censos década 2020](#) Contact: UNHCR Protection Unit in Panama: panpaprc@unhcr.org

More information: Solicitar la condición de apátrida en Panamá ([web](#)), Prevención de la Apatridia en Panamá ([ebook](#)).