



The Philippines: Administrative structure, ID numbers and ID cards

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Introduction

The following note briefly describes the administrative structure in the Philippines. The note will further present the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys), which was launched in 2020. In doing so, the personal ID number and the physical and digital Philippine ID card are introduced as well.

The note is based on information obtained during a fact-finding mission to the Philippines in September 2023 as well as open source information.

The administrative structure

The Philippines is the 13th most populous country in the world with a population of nearly 116.5 million. As of November 2023 there are more than ten million Philippine citizens living abroad, making the Philippines one of the world's largest emigrant populations.¹

Administratively the country is divided into 82 provinces within 17 regions. The regional level is merely administrative and without political organs. The provinces are divided into cities and municipalities. The lowest level of local government unit is the barangay. There are approximately 42.000 barangays in the Philippines.²

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) is mandated to administrate and issue civil status documents, which include birth, marriage and death certificates as well as Certificates of No Marriage Record (CENOMAR). Vital events must, however, be registered at a local civil registration office.³ Registrations are performed at around 1634 local civil registry offices throughout the country.⁴ After registration at a local civil registration office, the data is forwarded to the PSA for processing and archiving.⁵ There are currently 63 PSA Outlets with a Civil Registry System in the Philippines, where Philippine citizens can have PSA certificates issued.⁶

¹ CIA - The World Factbook, 6 November 2023; United Nations ESCAP, year of issue n/a.

² Philippine Statistics Authority A, 24 October 2023; Landinfo, 2 June 2015.

³ Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023; Landinfo, 2 June 2015.

⁴ United Nations ESCAP, year of issue n/a.

⁵ Landinfo, 2 June 2015; Philippine Statistics Authority B, 26 September 2023, PowerPoint p. 10.

⁶ Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023.

Until recent years, the Philippines have not had a national ID system or a national ID card. However, other government-issued ID documents, which are more sector-specific, have been (and are still) issued, such as the Unified Multi-purpose Identification Card (UMID).⁷

The Philippine Identification System (PhilSys)

To establish a single national ID system for all Philippine citizens and foreign nationals residing in the Philippines, the Philippine Identification System Act was passed in August 2018. The Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) is administered by the PSA.⁸

The main components of PhilSys are the PhilSys Number (PSN) and the PhilID.⁹ The PhilSys Number is a unique and permanent 12-digit identification number, which is generated randomly, and the PhilID refers to the physical ID card. After completion of the registration to PhilSys, a PSN and PhilID are issued to all Philippine citizens and foreigners residing in the Philippines (see 'PhilID' below).¹⁰

In the Philippines, children do not receive a personal ID number from birth.¹¹ However, since the year 2000 all birth certificates receive a birth reference number (BRn) when filed in the PSA's systems.¹² According to a representative from PSA, the PSA will focus on having the same numbers on both the birth certificate and the PhilID in the future.¹³

According to the law, it is not mandatory to register to PhilSys. However, it is highly recommended by the Philippine authorities for citizens to register, as PhilSys can be used for numerous government and private services.¹⁴

As of 17 November 2023, nearly 82 million people have registered to PhilSys.¹⁵

PhilSys registration

The initial registration process for PhilSys started on 12 October 2020.¹⁶ The PSA established a registration process in three steps as listed below:

1. Submission of demographic data (see image 1 'PhilSys registration form') and setting up appointment for step 2.
2. Validation of demographic data against original documents and capture of biometric information.

⁷ Landinfo, 2 June 2015; PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

⁸ PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available); Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023.

⁹ Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023.

¹⁰ PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

¹¹ Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023.

¹² Landinfo, 2 June 2015; Philippine Statistics Authority Helpline, (year of issue not available).

¹³ Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023.

¹⁴ Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023; PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

¹⁵ PSA - PhilSys B, (November 2023).

¹⁶ PSA - PhilSys E, (December 2020).

3. Issuance of PSN and PhilID.¹⁷

The first step of registration can be done online at www.register.philsys.gov.ph. The online registration process for PhilSys began in April 2021. For step 2 it is required to show up physically at a registration centre for capturing of the biometric information.¹⁸ The biometric information required includes a front-facing photograph, fingerprints, and the iris scan of the registrant.¹⁹ According to the PhilSys website, 235 registration centres are available nationwide.²⁰

For registration to PhilSys, it is required to bring the original copy of any of the primary documents listed below:

1. PSA-issued Certificate of Live Birth together with one government-issued ID document, which bears full name, front-facing photograph, and signature or thumb mark;
2. Philippine Passport or ePassport issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA);
3. UMID card;
4. Land Transportation Office-issued Student's License Permit or Non-Professional/Professional Driver's License.²¹

If the registrant does not have any of the above-mentioned documents, he/she may bring an original copy of any of the following secondary documents listed [here](#).

There is no minimum age for registration to PhilSys. For children below five years of age, only the demographic information and a photograph are required. The PSN will be linked to their parent or legal guardian. At the age of 15, the child's biometric data must be recaptured and the demographic information updated.²²

¹⁷ PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

¹⁸ PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

¹⁹ Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023.

²⁰ PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

²¹ PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

²² PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

Image 1: PhilSys registration form (NIDC reference material).

PhilID Card

The physical PhilID card is made of polycarbonate and contains the following information of the cardholder²³:

- Photo.
- PhilSys card number (not the same as the PSN).
- Given names, middle name and last name.
- Date, month and year of birth.
- Gender.
- Blood type.
- Marital status.
- Place of birth.
- Address.
- Date of issue.²⁴

The back of the PhilID card also contains a QR code as well as a barcode and serial number. According to the PhilSys website, the PhilID card contains several security elements, including microprint, UV fluorescent images, latent image and colour shifting print.²⁵

ePhilID

The digital version of the PhilID, the ePhilID, contains the same information and can be used in the same way as the physical card. Any person who has completed registration and received a PSN, but has not received a physical card yet, can obtain an ePhilID.²⁶

The ePhilID comes in both a printed and a downloadable version. The printed version can be claimed at any PhilSys registration centre. The downloadable version gives registered persons, who have received a notification from the PSA on their phones, access to a digital copy of their ePhilID, which can be stored on a mobile device. Both versions hold a QR code.²⁷

Fees and validity of PhilID

The first time-issuance of the PhilID is free of charge. If a citizen's PhilID is damaged or lost, a fee is charged for the replacement.²⁸ The ePhilID can be claimed with no cost.²⁹

²³ Philippine Statistics Authority, Manila, September 2023.

²⁴ PSA - PhilSys C, (year of issue not available).

²⁵ PSA - PhilSys C, (year of issue not available).

²⁶ PSA - PhilSys D, (year of issue not available).

²⁷ PSA C, (11 April 2023).

²⁸ NEDA, (year of issue not available).

²⁹ PSA - PhilSys D, (year of issue not available).

For Philippine citizens, the PhilID has no expiration and will only be renewed upon updating of demographic information and biometric information. For resident aliens the PhilID is valid for only one year and may be renewed annually.³⁰

The ePhilID has the same validity as the PhilID.³¹

As of 17 November 2023, more than 47 million physical PhilID cards have been dispatched and approximately 44 million of these have been delivered to the registrants. Furthermore, almost 42.5 million ePhilIDs have been printed and issued and approximately 1.3 million ePhilIDs have been downloaded.³²

Corruption

According to GAN Integrity, corruption is a significant problem in the Philippines and there is a very high risk of corruption in the Philippines's public services sector especially in the form of gifts and facilitation payments.³³ Furthermore, *“the legal anti-corruption framework in the Philippines is complicated and poorly enforced (...) and officials are rarely prosecuted and convicted for corruption crimes”*.³⁴

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2022, the Philippines ranks as number 116 out of 180 countries with 33 points out of 100 (with zero ranking most corrupt).³⁵

³⁰ PSA - PhilSys A, (year of issue not available).

³¹ PSA - PhilSys D, (year of issue not available).

³² PSA - PhilSys B, (November 2023).

³³ GAN integrity, 30 September 2020.

³⁴ GAN integrity, 30 September 2020.

³⁵ Transparency International, 2022.

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