

The following table shows the crude birth-rates in New Zealand from 1919 to 1945 :—
Table No. 5.—Table showing Birth-rates per 1,000 of Population from 1919 to 1945

Year.			Birth-rate.	Year.			Birth-rate.
1919	..	..	21·42	1933	..	..	16·63
1920	..	..	25·09	1934	..	..	16·51
1921	..	..	23·36	1935	..	..	16·17
1922	..	..	23·18	1936	..	..	16·64
1923	..	..	21·96	1937	..	..	17·29
1924	..	..	21·60	1938	..	..	17·93
1925	..	..	21·20	1939	..	..	18·73
1926	..	..	21·06	1940	..	..	21·19
1927	..	..	20·29	1941	..	..	22·81
1928	..	..	19·57	1942	..	..	21·73
1929	..	..	19·03	1943	..	..	19·70
1930	..	..	18·83	1944	..	..	21·59
1931	..	..	18·45	1945	..	..	23·22
1932	..	..	17·12				

A picture over a longer period is given in the next table, showing average birth-rates in each quinquennium, from 1871-75 to 1941-45 :—

Table No. 6.—Table showing Birth-rates per 1,000 of Population from 1871-75 to 1941-45

Quinquennium.			Average Birth-rate.	Quinquennium.			Average Birth-rate.
1871-75	..	..	39·88	1911-15	..	..	25·98
1876-80	..	..	41·21	1916-20	..	..	24·32
1881-85	..	..	36·36	1921-25	..	..	22·26
1886-90	..	..	31·15	1926-30	..	..	19·76
1891-95	..	..	27·68	1931-35	..	..	16·98
1896-00	..	..	25·75	1936-40	..	..	18·36
1901-05	..	..	26·60	1941-45	..	..	21·81
1906-10	..	..	27·06				

It will be realized, however, that crude birth-rates do not present a true picture of the fecundity of the population, which is related not so much to total population as to the number of women of child-bearing age in a given community. This, in turn, is related both to the age and sex structure of the community, and also to the marriage-rate. In the earlier years, despite the low proportion of females, crude birth-rates were high, reflecting the large families typical of a pioneering country. On the other hand, in later years the proportion of females increased, while the birth-rate fell, a tendency indicative of the fall in the size of the families.

The very high rates ruling from 1871 to 1885 are clearly associated with the prosperity of the period and the large increase of immigrants of the reproductive age-groups. From 1876-80 to 1931-35 there was a steady fall. A slight reversal in the trend from 1920 to 1924 as shown in Table No. 5 is clearly associated with the return of the troops from the 1914-18 war. This is particularly so in 1920. The steady rise from 1935 to date is of considerable interest. The economic insecurity during the depression undoubtedly restrained child-birth, but the rising wages and the emergence of a feeling of greater economic security, both actual and potential, undoubtedly stimulated the birth-rate. The possibility of conscription in the early years of the war also coincides with an increase in the birth-rate. In the 1914-18 war single men were called up first, and subsequent callings-up were determined by the number of children. The thought that this provision would hold sway in the 1939-45 war did stimulate the birth-rate in the early war years. The rise in more recent years is associated with the return of the troops.