

The approximate increases under the various heads which go to make up the gross total increase of £104,000 in the annual values of all pensions over the past two years are as follows:—

	£
Old-age pensions to females, 60 to 64	50,000
Military pensions	30,000
Increase of income benefits	8,000
Sundry benefits under 1913 Act (old-age)	1,500
Sundry benefits under 1913 Act (widows')	1,000
Additional pensions under 1914 Act (widows')	1,500
Normal increase (old-age)	4,000
Normal increase (widows')	8,000
Total	£104,000

OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

Pensions in Force.—The number of pensions under this head on the 31st March, including 697 Natives, was 19,352, being an increase of 1,302 on the figures of the previous year, as follows:—

	Europeans.	Maoris.	Totals.
New grants	3,047	111	3,158
Deduct—			
Deaths	1,520	62	1,582
Cancellations	252	22	274
			1,302

The annual liability in regard to these was £475,970, being an average of £24 11s. 10d. per pension.

Of the European pensioners 2,150 were females of the ages of 60 to 64 inclusive. The remaining 16,505 being 65 and over.

The percentages of European pensioners of the full age of 65 and upwards to the total population of those ages, and to those eligible by age and residence, for the past five years are shown in the following table:—

At 31st March.	(a.) European Population 65 and over.	Percentage to Total Population.	(b.) European Population 65 and over eligible by Residence.	European Pensioners 65 and over.	Percentages.	
					To (a).	To (b).
1911 (actual)	47,700	4.72	41,990	15,336	32	36
1912 (estimated)	48,294	4.68	42,772	15,984	33	37
1913	48,915	4.60	43,557	15,830	32	36
1914	49,473	4.53	44,209	16,204	32	36
1915	49,104	4.46	44,000	16,505	33	37

It will be observed that for the past year the estimated portion of the population from which pensioners are drawn is less than in the preceding year. This is explained by the fact of the deaths supplied by the Government Statistician exceeding by several hundreds the number of people reaching the age of 65, as shown by the census papers of 1911. The percentages, however, do not vary if the figures of the previous year form the basis of computation.

The percentage of female pensioners aged 60 to 64 (2,150) to the estimated female population of that age (13,349) has increased somewhat, the percentage at the close of the year being 16 per cent. as against 10 per cent. in the previous year.

62 pensioners were in receipt of the increased allowance available to males aged 60 and to females aged 55 with two or more children under 14 years of age.

2,990 married couples were on the roll at the close of the year.

Particulars relating to the distribution of pensioners throughout the Dominion; to the number payable at each rate; and to the ages, sex, conjugal condition, and nationality of all pensioners are set out in the appendix; as also is a summary of the pensions granted, and the deaths and cancellations, in each year since 1898.

New Claims.—The number of claims lodged during the year was 3,625, being 741 less than in the previous year. These, with 876 cases awaiting investigation at the close of the previous year, made a total of 4,501, dealt with as follows:—

Granted	3,158
Rejected (including deaths and withdrawals)	653
Awaiting investigation on the 31st March	690
Total	4,501

The new pensions granted to Maoris numbered 111, being 3 more than in the previous year. In 126 cases the pensioner had previously been on the roll.

Of the European applicants, 1,141 were unable to produce any evidence of age, and the Department was able to obtain the necessary proofs in 926 cases, 800 of which were favourable to the applicant. In 74 cases the pension was refused on account of the pension-age not having been reached.