

PART II.—PUBLIC HYGIENE.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ended 31st March, 1932. It is necessarily brief and devoid of graphs, owing to need of economy.

SECTION I.—VITAL STATISTICS.

POPULATION.

The mean population of the Dominion for 1931 (exclusive of Maoris) was estimated to be 1,444,901. This total represents an increase over the corresponding figure for the previous year of 19,817, or a percentage increase of population of 1·39.

BIRTHS.

The births of 26,622 living children were registered in the Dominion during 1931, as against 26,797 in 1930. The birth-rate for 1931 was thus 18·42 per 1,000 of mean population. The general course of the birth-rate during the last five years is shown in the following table:—

Births (Number and Rate) in New Zealand, 1927–1931.

Year.	Total Number of Births registered.	Birth-rate per 1,000 of Mean Population.
1927 .. .. .	.. 27,881	20·29
1928 .. .. .	.. 27,200	19·56
1929 .. .. .	.. 26,747	19·01
1930 .. .. .	.. 26,797	18·80
1931 .. .. .	.. 26,622	18·42

The birth-rate steadily declines. There were 26,622 births for a population of 1,444,901 and there were 12,047 deaths, the difference or natural increase being 14,575 persons, or 1·0 per cent. only of the total population. Back in 1870 the natural increase was 3·1 per cent.

DEATHS.

The total number of deaths (12,047) registered during the year 1931, as compared with 12,199 in 1930, shows a decrease of 152.

Crude Death-rates.

Year.	Crude Death-rate per 1,000 Mean Population.	Year.	Crude Death-rate per 1,000 Mean Population.
1927 .. .. .	.. 8·45	1930 .. .. .	.. 8·56
1928 .. .. .	.. 8·49	1931 .. .. .	.. 8·34
1929 .. .. .	.. 8·75		

New Zealand has a very low general death-rate, but, owing to the steadily reducing birth-rate, her annual natural increase of population is only 1·0 per cent.

STILL-BIRTHS.

Still-births, which are defined by the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1924 as “ children which have issued from their mother after the expiration of the twenty-eighth week of pregnancy, and which were not alive at the time of such issue,” are compulsorily registrable in the Dominion. The next table shows the number of such births and their rate per 1,000 live births in individual years for the quinquennium 1927–1931.

Still-births (Number and Rate) in New Zealand, 1927–1931.

Year.	Total Number of Still-births registered.	Rate of Still-births per 1,000 Live-births.
1927 .. .. .	.. 878	31·5
1928 .. .. .	.. 839	30·8
1929 .. .. .	.. 870	32·5
1930 .. .. .	.. 865	32·3
1931 .. .. .	.. 809	30·4

There was a reduction in the still-birth rate this year, and further on will be seen a reduction also in the death-rate of infants under one week of age.

(NOTE.—Still-births are not included, either as births or deaths in the various numbers and rates given elsewhere in this report.)