

The movement over ten years is calculated as under :—

Birth-rates per 1,000 of Population.

State or Colony.	1896.	1897.	1898.	1899.	1900.	1901.	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.
Queensland ...	30·06	29·92	28·28	27·31	30·21	28·28	27·68	24·71	27·12	..
New South Wales ...	28·35	28·42	27·14	27·10	27·43	27·60	27·17	25·28	26·73	26·73
Victoria ...	27·33	26·59	25·72	26·71	25·82	25·77	25·23	24·46	24·65	24·83
South Australia ...	28·46	26·97	24·98	25·51	25·78	25·39	24·85	23·43	24·70	23·82
Western Australia ...	22·65	25·82	29·35	30·64	31·46	30·32	30·09	30·27	30·34	30·30
Tasmania ...	28·16	27·73	26·24	25·98	28·25	28·40	28·95	28·61	29·59	29·32
New Zealand ...	26·33	25·96	25·74	25·12	25·60	26·34	25·89	26·61	26·94	27·22

This table shows that although New Zealand had in 1900 the lowest birth-rate in Australasia, the rate in this colony for 1905 was higher than that of Victoria and some others.

A declining birth-rate is noticeable in many civilised countries, and attention has been drawn by statisticians and political economists to the serious consequences that may result. That fertility among women in New Zealand is decreasing, from whatever causes, further facts will tend to show.

Taking the number of married women in New Zealand at what may be considered the child-bearing ages (*i.e.*, from 15 to 45 years, inclusive) as shown by each census since 1878, and for the same years the number of legitimate births (excluding plural) registered, the birth-rate per 1,000 married women of the above-stated ages is easily found, and is shown to be steadily declining. In 1878 the rate was 337 per 1,000, in 1896 it had fallen to 252, and in 1901 to 244; or, in other words, in 1878 one married woman of the ages specified in every three gave birth to a child, while in 1901 the rate was one in four only. The figures for each census year are given below.

Birth-rates (Legitimate) per 1,000 Married Women at Child-bearing Ages for each Census Year, 1878 to 1901.

Year (Census).	Number of Married Women between 15 and 45 Years of Age.	Number of Legitimate Births (Confinements).	Birth-rate per 1,000 Married Women of from 15 to 45 Years of Age.
1878 ...	50,995	17,196	337·2
1881 ...	57,458	18,003	313·3
1886 ...	62,704	18,532	295·5
1891 ...	63,165	17,455	276·3
1896 ...	69,807	17,596	252·1
1901 ...	79,406	19,355	243·8

And another table is given, showing for a period of twenty years the numbers of married women at the quinquennial periods of age belonging to the full term 15 to 45 years, with the proportions that those numbers bear to every 100 married women living at 15-45.

These proportions are found to have diminished appreciably at the earlier ages, 15-20 and 20-25; but the numbers of the living are much smaller at those ages than at the higher ones, 25-30 and onwards to 40-45, and the effect of this lesser number of wives at the lower ages in reducing the birth-rate would not be so much as might at first be thought probable.

It is, however, undoubtedly a fact that to have a growing proportion of wives at the earlier productive ages is the best position, but it is not the one which obtains at present in New Zealand.

Married Women under 45 Years of Age, given according to Age-groups, as at the Censuses of 1881, 1891, and 1901; with the Proportion in each Group for every 100 of the Whole.

Age-groups.			Married Women under 45, excluding Chinese.					
			Numbers at Census.			Proportion per Cent.		
			1881.	1891.	1901.	1881.	1891.	1901.
15-20 ...	...	...	1,233	750	777	2·14	1·19	0·98
20-25 ...	...	...	8,996	8,862	10,053	15·66	14·03	12·66
25-30 ...	...	...	13,133	14,540	17,923	22·86	23·02	22·57
30-35 ...	...	...	12,656	14,576	19,617	22·03	23·08	24·70
35-40 ...	...	...	11,811	12,959	16,854	20·55	20·51	21·23
40-45 ...	...	...	9,629	11,478	14,182	16·76	18·17	17·86
Totals ...	...	...	57,458	63,165	79,406	100·00	100·00	100·00

A further table shows the declining birth-rate, and the increase in the marriage-rate, in the United Kingdom.