

The proportion of illegitimate births per 1,000 unmarried women—*i.e.*, spinsters and widows—at the reproductive ages, covering a period of twenty years, is shown:—

Year.	Unmarried Women aged 15-45 Years.	Illegitimate Births.	Illegitimate-birth Rate per 1,000 Unmarried Women.
1886	56,277	602	10.70
1891	68,990	638	9.25
1896	89,722	834	9.30
1901	105,420	937	8.89
1906	116,506	1,132	9.72

The rate in New South Wales for 1905 was 16.24 per 1,000 unmarried women, in Victoria the rate was 10.31 for 1901, while in England and Wales the rate was as low as 8.1 for the year 1906.

For England and Wales the proportion of illegitimate births to the total births in 1906 was 4 per cent., having gradually diminished from 7 per cent. in 1845.

The average proportion of illegitimate births in Scotland in five years was 6.3 per cent., but in Ireland the extremely low average of 2.6 per cent. obtained.

The figures in the next table, which give the percentages of illegitimate births to the total births in a number of foreign countries, cover in most cases a period of five years.

Country.	Illegitimate Births per Cent.	Country.	Illegitimate Births per Cent.
Germany... ..	9.08	France	8.82
Prussia	7.68	Belgium	7.67
Bavaria	13.43	Netherlands	2.60
Saxony	12.89	Sweden	11.13
Austria	14.20	Norway	7.43
Hungary	9.13	Italy	6.45

The Legitimation Act.

An important Act was passed in 1894, entitled the Legitimation Act, which makes provision for the legitimation of children born before marriage on the subsequent marriage of their parents. Under this Act any child born out of wedlock, whose parents afterwards marry, is deemed to be legitimised by such marriage on the birth being registered in the manner prescribed by the Act. For legitimation purposes Registrars must register a birth when called upon to do so by any person claiming to be the father of an illegitimate child; but such person is required to make a solemn declaration that he is the father, and that at the time of the birth there existed no legal impediment to his marriage with the mother of the child. He has also to produce the evidence of his marriage. It will thus be seen that in cases dealt with under the Act registration becomes the test of legitimacy. In the December quarter of 1894, 11 children were legitimised; in the year 1895 the number was 68; in 1896, 56; in 1897, 48; in 1898, 59; in 1899, 41; in 1900, 62; in 1901, 47; in 1902, 96; in 1903, 65; in 1904, 87; in 1905, 84; in 1906, 125; and in 1907, 114, making altogether 963 legitimations since the passing of the law.

Maternity Homes and the Registration of Nurses and Midwives.

There are four maternity homes now open for the use of the public, one at each of the principal centres. The St. Helens Hospital at Wellington was opened in June, 1905; that at Dunedin in October, 1905; that at Auckland, in June, 1906; and that at Christchurch in April, 1907. Up to the end of March, 1907, a total of 564 births had taken place in the three hospitals, and 154 confinements had been attended by the institution nurses outside the hospitals. These institutions are a development of the policy begun by legislation in 1901, when the Nurses Registration Act was passed, followed in 1904 by the Midwives Act, the latter providing that after a certain date only those midwives who were duly registered would be qualified to practise on their own account. Thirty-three nurses' certificates have been issued to those who were trained in the hospitals and were qualified to practice, while 996 midwives have been registered, 149 of these holding special certificates.

The maternity hospitals are not intended in any sense to be charitable institutions, and it is expected that they will be self-supporting.