

According to the census returns for 1911 there were 100 boys between the ages of five and fifteen for every 97 girls. Now that it is compulsory for all children of school age to attend a school whenever it is open, it may well be asked what is the reason for this discrepancy. Certainly it is true that a larger proportion of girls attend private primary schools, but even after taking these into consideration we find that the numbers are 100 boys to every 94 girls. An examination of the figures set out in Table B reveals two important sources of leakage. In the first place, we find that for every 100 boys between the ages of five and six in attendance at public schools there were between 89 and 90 girls; and, secondly, of children thirteen years and over there were 100 boys to every 87 girls. With regard to this last figure, it might be supposed that girls, being somewhat quicker at passing through the standards than boys, enter the high school at an earlier age; but a glance at the figures for the secondary schools immediately negatives such an argument—there are only 70 girls in attendance to every 100 boys. We then arrive at three conclusions: (1) A considerable number of girls never enter the primary schools; (2) generally speaking, girls enter the primary schools at a later age than boys; (3) generally speaking, girls leave the primary schools at a much earlier age than boys.

In regard to (1), the census figures for 1911 throw some light on the matter; a larger proportion of girls than boys receive instruction at home—2,791 as against 2,057. Such home instruction, if reasonably efficient, is a ground for exemption under section 150 of the Education Act.

No. (2) is no doubt due to the reluctance of parents to send their girls to school at too early an age. The compulsory age is seven years.

No. (3) may be due to two causes, both of which, however, are closely related. It will be seen that, although there are only 87 girls to every 100 boys in attendance over the age of thirteen years, there are 92 girls to every 100 boys in Standard VI. The reason is that girls develop mentally at a more rapid rate than boys, and consequently pass through the standards at an average rate of a year quicker than boys. Hence a proportionately large number of girls succeed in obtaining an exemption certificate a year or more before they reach the age of exemption, and of these many are withdrawn from school immediately, before the child has obtained the full benefit of school discipline and instruction. A somewhat greater degree of differentiation in the work of the girls from that of the boys in the higher classes, more especially in the direction of giving them some instruction and training in home science, would leave less excuse for the apparent failure of parents to appreciate the fact that the sound education of girls is just as important as that of boys.

An examination of the figures published by the Department of Public Instruction in New South Wales reveals a precisely similar condition of affairs in that State.

It is interesting, in this connection, to note the proportion of girls to boys in the whole population between the ages of five and fifteen and on the rolls of the public primary schools of England, the United States, and Australia. For every hundred boys we find the number of girls to be as follows:—

—						Population, 5-15.	Schools.
England	..	..	..	..	..	100	98
United States	..	..	..	..	..	98	98
Queensland	..	..	..	..	..	98	94
New South Wales	..	..	..	..	..	98	91
Victoria	..	..	..	..	..	98	95
Western Australia	..	..	..	..	..	99	91
Tasmania	..	..	..	..	..	98	92
New Zealand	..	..	..	..	..	97	91

Table C1 shows the age and sex of the pupils on the rolls of the public schools in the several education districts at the end of 1911.