

NEW CLAIMS.

Old-age Pensions.—The number of claims lodged under this head during the year totalled 2,499, a decrease of 476 on the figures of the previous year. These, with the 690 cases awaiting investigation at the seventy-three agencies of the Department at the 31st March, 1912, made a grand total of 3,189 dealt with, which were accounted for as follows:—

Granted	...	...	...	2,072
Rejected (including deaths and withdrawals)	...	...	...	598
Being investigated on 31st March, 1913	...	...	...	519

Total ... 3,189

Of the 2,072 granted, 136 represent applicants who had been previously in receipt of a pension.

The following table relates to the number of claims lodged in each year since 1906, the number of such claims granted and the number of applicants who could not produce evidence of age:—

				Number of Claims.	Number of New Pensions.	Number without Proof of Age.
1907	...	...	...	2,577	2,031	672
1908	...	...	...	2,327	1,740	639
1909	...	...	...	2,834	2,113	812
1910	...	...	...	2,892	2,304	874
1911	...	...	...	2,963	2,399	810
1912	...	...	...	2,975	2,318	928
1913	...	...	...	2,499	2,072	846

These figures show that during the years 1909 to 1912, inclusive, each of which was immediately preceded by an amendment of the Act liberalizing the provisions of former measures, the number of applicants showed a marked increase, no doubt due to the desire of the old people to take advantage of the added benefits provided; but when a year like last year was reached, the work of which was not disturbed by any variation of the law immediately preceding it, the number of those seeking admission to the roll reverted approximately to the number who applied in the years 1907 and 1908, which followed lean years as far as legislation was concerned.

The total claims lodged since the Act came into operation in 1898 now number 47,742, of which number 36,823 have been established, 44 per cent. of these latter being still on the roll.

The new pensioners include 117 Maoris. Of the remainder, all but 104 were of British extraction, including 100 whites born in New Zealand.

The total number of white New-Zealanders admitted to the roll is shown in the following table:—

Year ended 31st March, 1904	...	...	...	...	1
" " 1905	...	...	...	...	2
" " 1906	...	...	...	...	10
" " 1907	...	...	...	...	16
" " 1908	...	...	...	...	23
" " 1909	...	...	...	...	52
" " 1910	...	...	...	...	66
" " 1911	...	...	...	...	85
" " 1912	...	...	...	...	88
" " 1913	...	...	...	...	100

Total ... 443

Of these, 363 are still drawing the pension.

As indicated above, 846 of the new applicants were unable to produce any documentary evidence of age, and the results of inquiries made in all quarters of the globe on their behalf by the Department are as follows:—

Age proved	...	...	...	...	530
Proved to be under age	...	...	...	...	121
No proof obtainable	...	...	...	...	147
Replies outstanding	...	...	...	...	48

Total ... 846

Of the 68 where replies were outstanding at the end of the previous year, 23 were proved to be eligible, 9 were found ineligible, and in the remaining 36 cases no evidence could be traced.

Requests were made to Head Office for verification of date of arrival in 525 cases, and in three of these only was the applicant's period of residence found to be short of the twenty-five years required.

The number of claims lodged in each district during the year, and how dealt with, are shown in Table X of the appendix.

The number of pensions granted in each year since 1898, and the deaths and cancellations over the same period, will be found in Table XI.

Widows' Pensions.—The number of claims lodged under this head during the year totals 668. These, with the 234 awaiting investigation at the close of the previous year, made a total of 902 dealt with, which were accounted for as follows:—

Granted	...	...	...	...	657
Rejected	...	...	...	...	166
On hand awaiting investigation	...	...	...	...	79

Total ... 902