

WIDOWS' PENSIONS.

Pensions in Force.—The number of pensioners under this head on the 31st March, including 15 Maoris, was 1,540, being an increase on the figures of the previous year of 227, thus :—

	Europeans.	Maoris.	Total.
New grants	418	3	421
Deduct—			
Deaths	1	..	..
Cancellations	189	4	194
Increase	..	..	227

There were in reality 10 deaths of widows during the year, but in 9 cases continuation of the pension was authorized in favour of the guardian of the children in accordance with the Act, thus leaving the pensions of these still in force. The total deaths since this class of pension was introduced number 20, and the total number of guardians appointed 16.

The liability at the close of the year was £29,320, an average of £19 per pension.

The percentage of pensioners drawing the full pension at the various rates for families of different sizes is 96 per cent.

New Claims.—The claims lodged during the year totalled 500, being a decrease of 168 on the figures of the previous year. These, with the 79 awaiting investigation at the commencement of the year, made a total of 579 dealt with, which were accounted for as follows :—

Granted	421
Rejected	77
On hand awaiting investigation	81
Total	579

The total claims lodged now number 2,365, of which number 1,869 have been established as pensions, 82 per cent. being still on the roll at the end of the year.

No statistics are available regarding the number of widows in the Dominion beyond the figures of the 1911 census, which show approximately 8,500 between the ages of 20 and 55. It is from these that the pensioners are mostly drawn, and the percentage now on the roll is 17 per cent. Last year it was 15 per cent. Of the 14,200 widows of the age of 60 and upwards, as shown by the same census, there are 5,694 on the old-age-pensions roll. Last year, out of 10,900 of the age of 65 and over, 4,906 were old-age pensioners.

Of the new pensioners, 3 were Maoris and 288 were New-Zealand-born whites; 6 only were of foreign extraction.

Of the rejected claims, numbering 77, 38 represent cases where the income or property of the applicant was in excess of the amount allowed by law.

The total families of the new pensioners range from 1 to 16, and the number of children under 14 in one family from 1 to 9, the averages being—Total family, 4.4; family under 14, 2.5. The average of the total family in the two preceding years was 5. Details are set out in Table XIII of the appendix. The children on whose account the pension has been granted, to date number 4,617, and the total children of pensioners 9,165, thus :—

Year	Pensions granted.	Children under Fourteen.	Total Children.
1911-12	791	1,923	3,992
„ 1912-13	657	1,604	3,295
„ 1913-14	421	1,090	1,868
Totals	1,869	4,617	9,155

Deduct from these figures the children of the 329 pensioners whose pensions have ceased, mostly on account of the said children having reached the age of 14, and there remains the number of children of the 1,540 on the roll at the 31st March, as follows :—

Children under 14	3,971
Total children (of all ages)	7,583

Particulars relating to the distribution of pensioners throughout the Dominion, to the number payable at each rate, and to the ages and nationality of the new pensioners as well as of all pensioners will be found in Tables I, III, V, and VI of the appendix. In Table IX details are supplied of the pensions granted in each year, the deaths and cancellations over the same period, and the annual liability.

Payments.—The gross payments on account of widows' pensions for the year amounted to £27,077, an increase of £4,963 on the figures of the previous year, the cost per head of the European population being a fraction under 6d. After deducting £4 10s. for overpaid instalments refunded, the net charge against the Consolidated Fund was £27,073.

The gross payments in each year to date have been as follows :—

	£
1911-12 (two months)	1,963
1912-13	22,115
1913-14	27,077
Total	£51,155

The instalments absolutely forfeited during the year amounted to £140.