

BIRTHS.

The births of 28,567 living children were registered in the Dominion during 1921, as against 29,921 in 1920 and a yearly average of 27,223 during the pre-war period 1910-14. The birth-rate for 1921 was thus 23·34 per 1,000 of mean population.

The general course of the birth-rate during the last ten years is shown in the following table:—

Births (Number and Rate) in New Zealand, 1912-21.

Year.					Total Number of Births registered.	Birth-rate per 1,000 of Mean Population.
1912	..	..	..	..	27,508	26·48
1913	..	..	..	..	27,935	26·14
1914	..	..	..	..	28,338	25·99
1915	..	..	..	..	27,850	25·33
1916	..	..	..	..	28,509	25·94
1917	..	..	..	..	28,239	25·69
1918	..	..	..	..	25,860	23·44
1919	..	..	..	..	24,483	21·54
1920	..	..	..	..	29,921	25·36
1921	..	..	..	..	28,567	23·34

It will be seen that the number of births registered in 1921 is higher than in any preceding year with the exception of 1920, but the rate is exceedingly low, being, indeed, the second-lowest recorded in the Dominion.

Still-births.—Still-births, which are defined by the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act of 1915 as “children which have issued from their mother after the expiration of the twenty-eighth week of pregnancy and which were not alive at the time of such issue,” are compulsorily registrable in the Dominion. The next table shows the number of such births, and their rate per 1,000 live births, in individual years for the quinquennium 1917-21.

Still-births (Number and Rate) in New Zealand, 1917-21.

Year.					Total Number of Still-births registered.	Rate of Still-births per 1,000 Live Births.
1917	..	..	..	..	694	24·6
1918	..	..	..	..	701	27·1
1919	..	..	..	..	680	27·8
1920	..	..	..	..	840	28·1
1921	..	..	..	..	903	31·6

The increasing ratio of still to live births as disclosed by this table is somewhat disquieting. It may only be that the phenomenon is due to increasing accuracy in registration. That there are other and deeper causes, however, would appear probable from the fact that the death-rate of infants in the first month after birth shows a somewhat similar behaviour. (Note: Still-births are not included either as births or deaths in the various numbers and rates given elsewhere in this report.)

DEATHS.

The number of deaths recorded during 1921 was 10,682, as compared with 12,109 in 1920 and a yearly average of 9,370 in the period 1910-14. The Government Statistician gives the crude death-rate for 1921 as 8·73 per 1,000 of mean population, and the standardized death-rate (International Index of Mortality) as 10·93.

The following table gives the number of deaths and the death-rate in the Dominion for the decennium 1912-21:—

Deaths (Number and Rate) in New Zealand, 1912-21.

Year.					Total Number of Deaths.	Crude (Actual) Death-rate.	Standardized Death-rate (Index of Mortality).
1912	..	..	..	..	9,214	8·87	11·27
1913	..	..	..	..	10,119	9·47	11·92
1914	..	..	..	..	10,148	9·31	11·85
1915	..	..	..	..	9,965	9·06	11·38
1916	..	..	..	..	10,596	9·64	11·88
1917	..	..	..	..	10,528	9·58	11·66
1918	..	..	..	..	16,364	14·84	16·80
1919	..	..	..	..	10,808	9·51	11·75
1920	..	..	..	..	12,109	10·27	12·80
1921	..	..	..	..	10,682	8·73	10·93

The crude death-rate for the year (8·73 per 1,000 of mean population) is remarkably low, and constitutes a new record, the previous best figure being the rate of 8·87 in 1912.

Infant Mortality.—The infant-mortality rate for 1921 was 47·8 per 1,000 births. This rate is the second-best on record, and is only excelled by the figure for 1919 (45·3 per 1,000 births).

The next table enables an estimate to be formed of the progress in infant-welfare work in New Zealand, and shows the relative obstinacy of the first-month mortality to react to the administrative measures which have proved so successful at later ages.