

Under the heading “Miscellaneous offences” it is to be observed that the number of offences for drunkenness, and drunkenness in charge of a motor-vehicle, has shown a fairly marked increase, which, unhappily, tends to retard the downward trend in the prison population. It would be preferable in cases of persistent drunkenness for commitments to be made to the inebriates’ institutions under the Reformatory Institutions Act rather than to prison.

Nationality of Offenders.—The following table summarizes those received into prison during the year on a nationality basis :—

Nationality of Prisoners.

Year.	New-Zealand-born (excluding Maoris).	Maoris.	British and Foreign.	Total.
1936	1,022	199	569	1,790
1935	1,256	226	676	2,158
1934	1,416	211	749	2,376
1933	1,604	253	874	2,731
1932	1,941	316	1,144	3,401
1931	1,779	271	1,153	3,203
1930	1,576	184	1,104	2,864

It will be observed that the number of commitments to prison of New-Zealand-born offenders has continued to decline, and it is also satisfactory to note that the number of Maoris received was less than during the previous year.

An analysis of the nature of the crimes under nationality of the offenders shows that the increase in the number of offences against the person has been due to crimes committed by persons born overseas.

Age of Prisoners.—Hereunder is set out in tabular form the prisoners received during the year classified in age groups, and for purposes of comparison similar figures over the past quinquennium are shown. A marked decrease in the number of young persons committed to prison or Borstal is shown, the number under twenty-five years of age being 100 less than for the previous year.

Age Group.	1932.	1933.	1934.	1935.	1936.
Under 20	222	175	120	131	96
20-25	559	459	391	350	285
25-30	504	403	343	321	254
30-40	903	747	640	545	437
40 and upwards ..	1,207	937	878	809	715
Not stated	6	10	4	2	3
Totals	3,401	2,731	2,376	2,158	1,790

Length of Sentences.—The following table gives an analysis according to the term of sentence imposed, showing the proportion of each group to the total number of persons received :—

Term of Sentences.	Number of Prisoners.		Percentage to Total Number sentenced.	
	1935.	1936.	1935.	1936.
Under one month	782	752	36·3	42·0
One month and under three months	452	371	20·9	20·7
Three months and under six months	259	218	12·0	12·2
Six months and under twelve months	174	132	8·1	7·4
One year and under three years	367	234	17·0	13·1
Three years and under five years	100	59	4·6	3·3
Five years and over	24	24	1·1	1·3
Totals	2,158	1,790	100·0	100·0

It will be observed that over 62 per cent. of the prisoners admitted to prison during the year under review received less than three months, and 75 per cent. less than six months. The futility of these short sentences of imprisonment from a reformatory or training point of view has been stressed repeatedly, and this view is supported by practically all authorities overseas.

The purpose of imprisonment, apart from the punitive and deterrent aspect, which seems to be the main idea underlying the short sentence, is the inculcation of habits of industry and orderliness and a sense of social responsibility. Time is an essential factor in habit-formation and also in the matter of imparting any vocational training calculated to assist the offender in earning his livelihood on release. The first sentence is said to be the “turning-point” in an offender’s career, and it is