

Some of the figures presented suggested a still higher incidence.

Applying the figures given to the whole of New Zealand it means that while in the year ending March, 1936, there were 24,395 live births there were probably 6,066 abortions, of which nearly two-thirds (4,000) were criminally induced.

The impression of the Committee is that this is an underestimate.

Serious as this is on general grounds, the matter is of particular importance in regard to the special problem which led to the setting-up of this Committee of inquiry—the *incidence of septic abortion*.

Septic infection, or blood-poisoning, is the most serious complication which may follow abortion.

Grave concern has been occasioned by a realization of the frequency of septic abortion, the most significant indication of which is the number of women who lose their lives as the result of this complication.

Attention has repeatedly been drawn to this problem by the officers of the Department of Health, the New Zealand Obstetrical and Gynæcological Society, and others interested in maternal welfare.

During the five-year period 1931-35, 176 women died from sepsis following abortion. In the same period there were only 70 deaths from sepsis following full-time child-birth. Some of the distressing repercussions from these tragedies have been revealed in the annual report of the Director-General of Health, 1936, which shows that in that period 338 children were left motherless by the death of 109 married women.

Another serious fact is that, while, owing to the strenuous efforts of those engaged in the direction and practice of midwifery, there has been a most gratifying fall in deaths from post-confinement sepsis from 2.02 per 1,000 live births in 1927 to 0.4 per 1,000 in 1935, deaths from post-abortion sepsis in the same period rose from 0.50 per 1,000 live births in 1927 to 1.73 per 1,000 in 1934, with a fall to 1 per 1,000 in 1935. These figures are illustrated by the following graph and accompanying table:—

Maternal Mortality.

Showing the numbers of deaths and the death-rate per 1,000 live births from certain causes, 1927 to 1935.

—	1927.	1928.	1929.	1930.	1931.	1932.	1933.	1934.	1935.
Maternal mortality, <i>including</i> septic abortion—									
Number	137	134	129	136	127	101	108	118	101
Rate	4.91	4.93	4.82	5.08	4.77	4.08	4.44	4.85	4.21
Maternal mortality, <i>excluding</i> septic abortion—									
Number	123	120	110	106	98	75	82	76	78
Rate	4.41	4.42	4.11	3.96	3.68	3.02	3.37	3.12	3.25
Puerperal septicaemia—									
Number	56	42	30	27	18	13	14	17	8
Rate	2.01	1.54	1.12	1.01	0.68	0.52	0.58	0.70	0.33
Septic abortion—									
Number—									
Married	14	14	19	26	26	24	16	29	17
Single				4	3	2	10	13	6
Rate	0.50	0.51	0.71	1.12	1.09	1.04	1.07	1.73	0.96