

The percentage is fairly uniform throughout the period taken, and when allowance is made for children leaving to attend private schools and for other circumstances, it must still be admitted that there is room for improvement in the number of children reaching at least the standard of education represented by S6. On the other hand, it is to be borne in mind that a number of pupils who leave the primary schools before passing S6 afterwards qualify for the S6 examination at continuation classes or classes of a similar nature.

Tables C3 and C4 show the percentages of children at the various ages and in the various classes for the last five years. There has been little difference in the figures during that period, and, in fact, during the last ten years. In 1915 53 per cent. of the children were under ten years of age, and 47 per cent. were over that age. The corresponding figures for 1914 were 54 and 46 respectively. The following figures show a comparison in this respect between conditions in England and in New Zealand :—

						*England.	New Zealand.
5 and under	7 years of age	..	..	..	..	22.8	18.6
7	12	..	..	..	..	58.1	56.6
12	15	..	..	..	..	19.0	23.0
15 years of age and over		..	..	..	..	0.1	1.8

* Excluding children from three to five years of age.

With regard to the proportion of children in the various classes it has been pointed out for some years that the number in the preparatory classes is too high, and teachers have been warned against the tendency to allow children to remain too long in these classes. Happily the percentage, which was 35.94 in 1915, was the lowest that has obtained for some years, although 21 per cent. of the children in the preparatory classes were over eight years of age, and 7 per cent. were over nine years of age.

The average ages of the pupils in the several classes for the two years 1914 and 1915 as at the end of the year's instruction were as follows :—

						1914.	1915.
						Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Preparatory classes	..	..	..	..	..	7 1	6 11
Class S1	..	..	..	..	..	9 1	9 1
" S2	..	..	..	..	..	10 1	10 1
" S3	..	..	..	..	..	11 2	11 2
" S4	..	..	..	..	..	12 3	12 2
" S5	..	..	..	..	..	13 1	13 1
" S6	..	..	..	..	..	13 11	13 10
" S7	..	..	..	..	..	15 2	— —
Mean of average age	..	..	..	..	..	9 9	9 9

The figures for each education district are shown in Table C5. The range of difference in the averages of the various districts calls for remark. The smallest difference is six months, while in S2 there is as wide a difference as ten months between the highest and lowest average age. Allowing for the fact that it is not possible to obtain so true an average in districts where the number of children is comparatively small, there still appears to be a certain lack of uniformity in the standard ages for the various districts. The mean of the average age for the Dominion varies very little from year to year.

Standard VI examinations for certificates of proficiency and competency are conducted by the Department's Inspectors, the pupils being examined in English and arithmetic, at least, by means of written tests. As all Inspectors now use the same scale of marks for the various branches of the subjects, and as far as possible are understood to be working on the same standard of attainment, a nearer approach than hitherto to uniformity in the results might be expected in the various districts. As a matter of fact, reference to Table C6 still shows a wide variation. In the case of proficiency certificates the percentage varied from 52 to 80, and in the case of competency certificates from 9 to 27. There is an improvement in the difference in range in the case of proficiency certificates over the figures of the preceding year, which varied from 49 to 82; little alteration appears in the competency figures. It must be pointed out, however, that the district showing the low percentage of 52 for proficiency certificates is 10 per cent. lower than any other