

during the year under review being 370 less than for the previous year. Since 1931 the decrease in the prison population has been 34 per cent., and it is of interest to observe that up to the date of the publishing of this report the numbers continue to diminish. The following table sets out in comparative form, and summarizes, the number of receptions and discharges over the past five years:—

Receptions and Discharges.

—		1931.	1932.	1933.	1934.	1935.
Number in custody at the beginning of year	..	1,569	1,657	1,583	1,443	1,234
*Number received during the year	..	6,354	6,179	5,087	4,529	4,159
*Number discharged or transferred	..	6,266	6,253	5,228	4,135	4,243
Number in custody at end of year	..	1,657	1,583	1,443	1,236	1,150
Daily average in custody	..	1,634	1,669	1,543	1,360	1,212

* NOTE.—These figures include inter-institutional transfers.

Reductions in Daily Average.—It will be observed from the foregoing table that the daily average number in custody—viz., 1,212—is 148 less than the number for the previous year, and is in fact the lowest figure for many years. If the fall in the number of receptions is maintained one can reasonably expect to see a steady diminution in the daily average, but in New Zealand the daily average has been relatively high because of the longer terms of Borstal detention and reformatory detention imposed by our Courts. This comparatively higher daily average than in England, for example, does not connote a higher incidence of crime in the Dominion.

Nature of Offences.—Although the public conscience from time to time is shocked by the reports of some isolated homicidal case or other grave crime, New Zealand is fortunate in having no criminal gangs who prey upon the community with an utter disregard for the sanctity of human life such as exist in the larger metropolitan cities overseas. Indeed, it can be said that there is no organized crime in the Dominion, and there is no doubt that this happy condition of affairs can be ascribed to the fact that the Courts in New Zealand promptly deal with any manifestation of a tendency to crimes of violence in a salutary manner.

The following table shows the nature of the offences classified under three main headings:—

Nature of Offences.

Year.		Offences against the Person.	Offences against Property.	Miscellaneous Offences.	Total Prisoners received.	Ratio to 10,000 of Population.
1935	..	175	887	1,096	2,158	13·76
1934	..	155	889	1,332	2,376	15·33
1933	..	196	1,048	1,487	2,731	17·75
1932	..	194	1,313	1,893	3,401	22·29
1931	..	216	1,155	1,832	3,203	21·29

It is satisfactory to observe from the foregoing table that the number of imprisonments for offences against property has continued to diminish, as also has the number of miscellaneous offences. A less satisfactory feature of the table, however, is the small increase in the number of offences against the person, and this is all the more disquieting because of the fact that this increase is almost entirely due to an increase in offences of a sexual nature, the most prominent variations being under the following classes:—

Nature of Offence.		1934.	1935.
Incest	..	9	12
Unlawful carnal knowledge	..	17	27
Indecent assault	..	10	28

It is pleasing to note from the table that the number of distinct persons involved has decreased by 218, and that the ratio of distinct persons to the general population is down to 13·76 per 10,000, as compared with 15·33 for the previous year. That this downward trend is fairly constant is indicated by the following figures for several decades back:—

Year.		Ratio of Persons received to each 10,000 of the General Population.	Year.		Ratio of Persons received to each 10,000 of the General Population.
1890	..	38·61	1925	..	20·88
1905	..	32·14	1935	..	13·76
1915	..	28·44			