

The following table sets out in comparative form the number of receptions, discharges, and the daily averages for the past five years :—

Receptions and Discharges, &c.						
	1932.	1933.	1934.	1935.	1936.	1937.
Number in custody at the beginning of year	1,657	1,583	1,443	1,234	1,150	962
Number received during the year ..	6,179	5,087	4,529	4,159	3,813	3,966
Number discharged or transferred ..	6,253	5,228	4,135	4,243	4,001	4,093
Number in custody at end of year ..	1,583	1,443	1,236	1,150	962	835
Daily average in custody	1,669	1,543	1,360	1,212	1,005	866

NOTE.—These figures include inter-institutional transfers.

The ratio of the daily average number in custody to the general population is 5·43 per 10,000, which is the lowest figure on record, but the ratio of distinct persons received to each 10,000 of the population is 1·16 higher than for the previous year.

The following table of figures shows the downward trend in recent years. It should be noted that receptions, for the purpose of these statistics, include all persons received under sentence regardless of the shortness of duration. This fact should be kept in mind when comparing the figures with statistics of countries overseas.

Year.	Ratio of Prisoners to 10,000 of Population.						
1890	38·61
1910	32·45
1914	31·05
1932	22·29
1933	17·75
1934	15·33
1935	13·76
1936	11·36
1937	12·52

The following table shows the nature of the offences, classified under three main headings, for the past five years :—

Nature of Offences.						
Year.	Offences against the Person.	Offences against Property.	Miscellaneous Offences.	Total.		
1937	191	675	1,125	1,991		
1936	189	599	1,002	1,790		
1935	175	887	1,096	2,158		
1934	155	889	1,332	2,376		
1933	196	1,048	1,487	2,731		

The increase of 201 over the previous year's total is made up mainly by the increase in offences against property, under which heading falls an increase of 50 offences for theft, 26 for fraud and false pretences, and 9 for forgery. To be added to these is an increase under the heading " Miscellaneous offences," the principal increase in this connection being approximately 100 additional imprisonments for drunkenness and related offences.

An analysis of the offences shows that fraud, thieving, and drunkenness substantially account for the increase in the number of prisoners received during the year. Having regard to the nature of these offences and the generally improved industrial conditions prevailing, it is apparent that the plea of economic necessity cannot be advanced as an extenuating factor by those involved. The lapses have been due not so much to lack of opportunities, as to failure to take proper advantage of them, especially the opportunity to occupy spare time satisfactorily. The cause of crime in New Zealand would appear to be more social than economic in origin.

Nationality of Prisoners.—The following table shows in comparative form the nationality of persons received into prison during the past six years. In contrast with the figures for last year it will be observed that the number of New Zealand born, and more especially Maoris, has increased. The type of Maori youth received at the Borstals in recent years is particularly undisciplined and difficult to handle. Intelligence tests and mental examinations disclose that a relatively small percentage of offenders have not a normal capacity to discern right from wrong, or are feebly inhibited, hence it is evident that the majority of criminal conduct amongst young New-Zealanders arises from a slackening-up of moral standards and a drift from a socially acceptable ethical code.