



# Hot Off The Press

LATEST STATISTICS FROM STATISTICS NEW ZEALAND

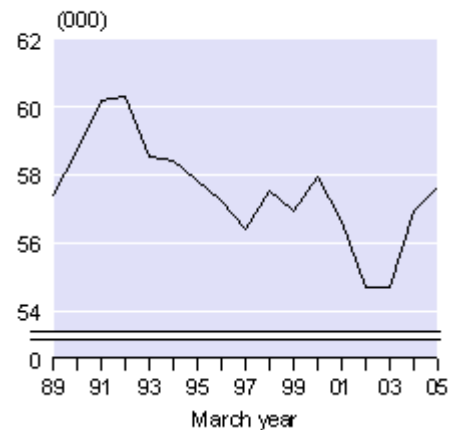
Embargoed until 10:45am – 5 May 2005

## Births and Deaths March 2005 quarter

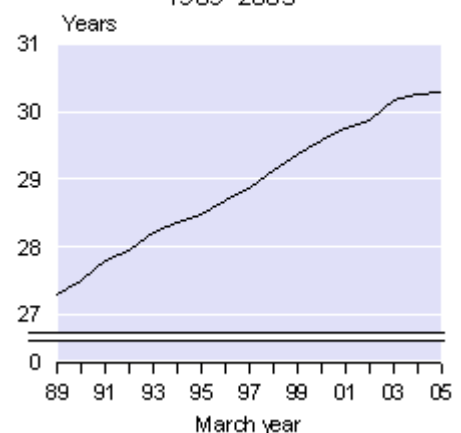
### Highlights

- There were **57,630 live births** registered in New Zealand in the March 2005 year.
- New Zealand women average **1.99 births** per woman.
- Women aged **30–34 years** had the highest fertility rate – 119 births per 1,000 women.
- The median age of women giving birth was **30 years** in the March 2005 year.
- The median age of women giving birth for the first time was **28 years** in the March 2005 year.
- There were **28,240 deaths** registered during the March 2005 year.
- Births exceeded deaths (natural increase of population) by **29,380** in the March 2005 year.

Live Births  
1989–2005



Median Age of Mother  
1989–2005



Brian Pink  
Government Statistician

5 May 2005  
Cat 32.900 Set 04/05 – 188

There is a companion Media Release published – [Births and Deaths: March 2005 quarter](#).

# Commentary

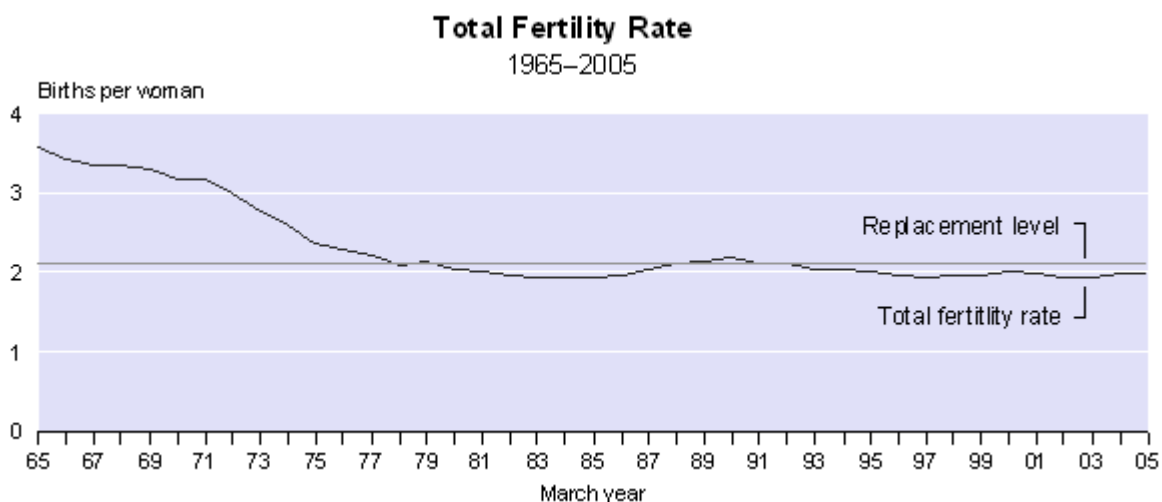
## Live births

There were 57,630 live births registered in New Zealand in the March 2005 year, 1.8 percent higher than the annual average over the last decade (56,630). During the March 2005 year, births of 29,600 boys and 28,030 girls were registered to mothers resident in New Zealand.

Live births for the March 2005 quarter totalled 14,580, a decrease of 440 compared with the March 2004 quarter. Live births for the June and September 2004 quarters showed increases of 1,000 and 510, respectively, and the December 2004 quarter showed a decrease of 310 when compared with the same quarter of the previous year.

## Annual fertility rates

The latest fertility rates indicate that New Zealand women average 1.99 births per woman. This figure is below the level required by a population to replace itself without migration (2.1 births per woman). Apart from a short period around 1990, fertility in New Zealand has been below the 'replacement level' since 1980.



Sub-replacement fertility is a common demographic phenomenon among developed countries, including France (1.9 births per woman), Australia (1.8), the Netherlands, England and Wales, and Sweden (all 1.7). Some countries, notably Italy and Spain, have recorded very low fertility levels in recent years (fewer than 1.3 births per woman), which is about one-third lower than New Zealand's current level. The United States' total fertility rate has been similar to New Zealand's in recent years.

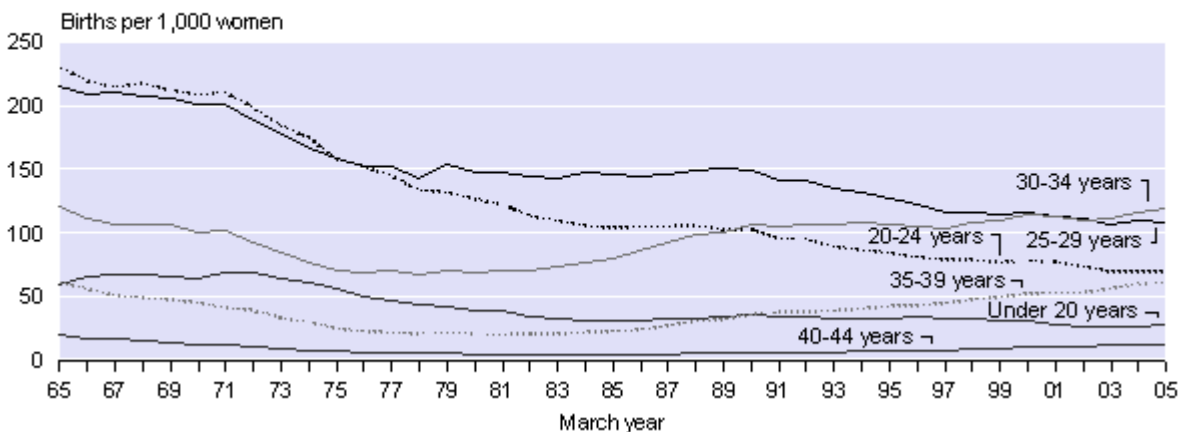
In New Zealand, the transition to sub-replacement fertility occurred later than in other developed countries. The transition occurred in Denmark and Sweden in the late 1960s; in Germany, the United States and Canada in the early 1970s; and in other developed countries, including Australia, in the mid-1970s. Sweden and New Zealand both experienced a brief recovery to replacement level around 1990.

## Trend toward later childbearing

The trend towards later marriages, delayed motherhood and smaller families is consolidating. Fewer New Zealand women in their teens and early twenties are having children. However, a growing proportion of births are to women in their thirties. In the March 2005 year, 48 percent of all newborn babies had a mother aged in her thirties, compared with 39 percent in the March 1995 year. In contrast, the number of newborn babies with a mother in her twenties dropped from 52 percent in 1995, to 41 percent in 2005.

In the March 2005 year, women aged 30–34 years had the highest fertility rate (119 births per 1,000 women), followed by those aged 25–29 years (108 per 1,000). This is a significant departure from the early 1970s, when early marriage and early childbearing were the norm, and 20–24 years was the most common age group for childbearing (about 200 per 1,000). At that time, the fertility rate for women aged 25–29 years (about 190 per 1,000) was twice that for women aged 30–34 years (about 95 per 1,000).

**Age-specific Fertility Rates**  
1965–2005



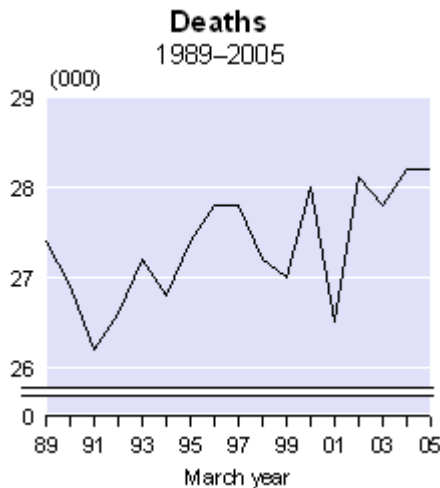
Between the 1995 and 2005 March years, fertility rates for women aged under 30 years dropped. The largest fertility decrease occurred among women aged 20–24 years; down 17 percent, from 84 per 1,000 in 1995 to 70 per 1,000 in 2005. In contrast, fertility rates for women aged 30 years and over have increased over the last decade. Fertility rates rose by 12 percent for women aged 30–34 years, by 43 percent for women aged 35–39 years and by 79 percent for women aged 40–44 years. However, the fertility rate for women aged 40–44 years is still much lower (12 per 1,000 in 2005) than for younger women.

On average, New Zealand women now have children about five years later than their counterparts in the early 1970s. The median age (half are younger, and half older, than this age) of New Zealand women giving birth is now 30.3 years, compared with 28.5 years in 1995, and 25.1 years in 1975.

The median age of women giving birth to their first child (based on children in the current relationship only) was 28.4 years in the year ended March 2005.

## Deaths and longevity

Deaths registered during the March 2005 year totalled 28,240, compared with 28,200 in the March 2004 year.



There were 6,270 deaths in the March 2005 quarter, a decrease of 180 compared with the March 2004 quarter. The June and September 2004 quarters recorded decreases of 60 and 210, respectively, while the December 2004 quarter recorded an increase of 490, compared with the same quarter in the previous year.

The median age at death in the March 2005 year was 76.2 years for males and 82.1 years for females. There were 13,960 male deaths and 14,280 female deaths. Just over three-quarters of the deceased were aged 65 years or over, while only 6 percent were aged under 40 years.

The crude death rate (deaths per 1,000 mean estimated resident population) was 6.9 in the March 2005 year, down from 7.5 in 1995. Because the crude death rate is influenced by the age structure of the population, it does not provide a true measure of the trends in mortality. Life tables are used to give a more accurate description of the mortality experience.

According to the New Zealand abridged life table for 2001–2003, a newborn girl can expect to live, on average, 81.2 years, and a newborn boy 76.7 years. These levels represent longevity gains since 1995–1997 of 1.5 years for females and 2.3 years for males. These gains were due largely to the reduction in mortality rates at late-working and retirement ages (50–89 years). Since 1970–1972, life expectancy at birth has increased by 6.6 years for females and 8.1 years for males.

While differences in mortality between males and females still remain, their longevity gap has narrowed. Newborn females in 2001–2003 can expect to outlive newborn males by 4.5 years, down from a peak of 6.4 years in 1975–1977. Likewise, non-Māori have a significant longevity advantage over Māori. Life expectancy at birth for females of Māori ethnicity in 2000–2002 was 73.2 years, compared with 81.9 years for non-Māori females. For males, the equivalent figures were 69.0 years for Māori and 77.2 years for non-Māori. This difference of about 8.5 years between Māori and non-Māori is slightly less than the estimated difference of 9.1 years in 1995–1997.

Life tables for other ethnicities, such as the broad Pacific and Asian ethnic groups, have not been produced because of the small number of death registrations and the uncertainty associated with ethnic identification and measurement.

## Infant mortality

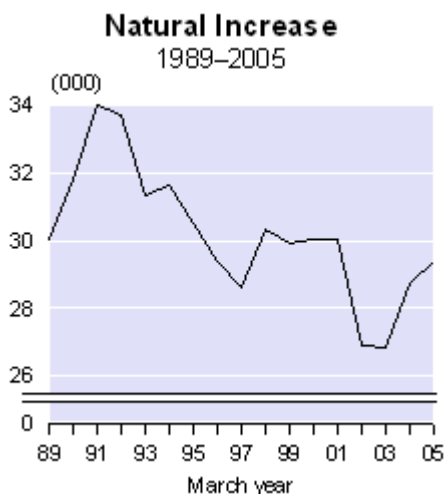
During the March 2005 year, the number of infant deaths (under one year of age) registered in New Zealand totalled 340. This figure is slightly higher than the average over the previous four years (300 infant deaths a year), which partly reflects annual fluctuations in infant death numbers, and partly the fact that the number of live births in the March 2005 year was about 2,000 greater than the average number of live births in the previous four years. A decade earlier, 420 infant deaths were registered. There has also been a drop in the infant mortality rate (infant deaths per 1,000 live births) during this 10-year period. In the March 2005 year, the infant mortality rate was 5.8 per 1,000, down from 7.3 per 1,000 in the March 1995 year and 16.0 per 1,000 in 1975.

## Natural increase of population

Natural increase of population represents the excess of births over deaths. Births outnumbered deaths by 29,380 in the March 2005 year. This was up 710 (2.5 percent) on the March 2004 year. The natural increase was 30,470 a decade ago in the March 1995 year.

During the March 2005 year, New Zealand's population increased by 38,600 (1.0 percent). Natural increase contributed 74 percent to this population growth, and net migration the remaining 26 percent. These percentages have varied in recent years, because of significant shifts in the migration balance. During the 1998–2000 December years, population growth was due solely to natural increase, as net migration was negative.

The rates of natural increase in the March 2005 and 2004 years were 7.2 and 7.1 per 1,000 mean population, respectively. This compares with 8.4 per 1,000 mean population in the March 1995 year.



For technical information contact:  
Anne Howard or Gillian Smeith  
Christchurch 03 964 8700  
**Email:** [demography@stats.govt.nz](mailto:demography@stats.govt.nz)

## Technical notes

### Births

Birth data for the March, June, September and December quarters of 1998 are based on the number of notifications received by the Department of Internal Affairs. All other birth data are based on live births registered in New Zealand to mothers resident in New Zealand by date of registration. Birth data exclude late registrations under Section 14 of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995. Section 14 births are those which were not registered in the ordinary way at the time the birth occurred. Such registrations can occur as late as retirement age.

### Replacement level fertility

Replacement level fertility is the average number of children a woman needs to have to produce one daughter who survives to childbearing age. Replacement level fertility is also described as the total fertility rate required for the population to replace itself, without migration.

The internationally accepted replacement level is 2.1 births per woman. Replacement level fertility allows for child mortality (children who die before reaching reproductive age) and the birth of more boys than girls. On average, throughout the world, 105 boys are born for every 100 girls. The actual replacement level will vary slightly from country to country, depending on child mortality rates. In countries with high child mortality, the total fertility rate will need to be higher than 2.1 births per woman to achieve replacement level.

### Total fertility rate

The total fertility rate is the average number of live births that a woman would have during her life if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates of a given period (usually a year). It excludes the effect of mortality.

### Children of this relationship

The birth registration forms ask whether there are any other children of this relationship. However, it is possible that children from previous relationships are included. Unfortunately, this question does not produce an accurate measure of all live births to a woman (needed for accurate measures of birth parity). For privacy reasons it is deemed unacceptable to ask women about children outside their current relationship.

### Life tables

A life table is a standard demographic device that provides a detailed description of the mortality experience prevailing in a population during a given period. It comprises an array of measures, including probabilities of death, probabilities of survival and life expectancies at various ages. The 2000–2002 life tables relating to New Zealand Māori, non-Māori and total populations, were released by Statistics New Zealand on 30 March 2004. These are available on the Statistics New Zealand website ([www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)). More details on life table methodology and results are included in the publication *New Zealand Life Tables 2000–2002*.

The 1995–1997 life tables for the total New Zealand, Māori and non-Māori populations published in July 1998 have been revised. For all populations, the revision incorporates updated population estimates (at 30 June 1996) and a revised method of estimating death rates at the oldest ages. For the Māori life table, smooth adjustment factors have also been applied to Māori deaths, by age, to allow for under-reporting of Māori deaths (relative to the Māori population). For the non-Māori life table, corresponding adjustments have been applied to non-Māori deaths, by age. These adjustment factors affect Māori life expectancy at birth by about 0.7 years and non-Māori life expectancy at birth by about 0.1 years. Revised figures for 1995–1997 are included in the publication entitled *New Zealand Life Tables 2000–2002*.

## **Resident population concept**

Unless otherwise stated, this release refers to vital events (births and deaths) registered in New Zealand by date of registration. It excludes births to women who normally reside overseas, and deaths of people who normally reside overseas. Demographic rates are calculated using the mean estimated resident population.

## **Rounding**

Birth and death figures contained in the table attached to this release are unrounded. All other figures have been rounded. Derived figures (for example, percentage annual increase) have been calculated using unrounded data.

## **More information**

For more information on [births](#) or [deaths](#), follow the links from the Technical Notes of this release on the Statistics New Zealand website.

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## Timing

Timed statistical releases are delivered using postal and electronic services provided by third parties. Delivery of these releases may be delayed by circumstances outside the control of Statistics New Zealand. Statistics New Zealand accepts no responsibility for any such delays.

### **Next release ...**

*Births and Deaths: June 2005 quarter* will be released on 18 August 2005.

For information on the changing face of older New Zealanders,  
visit [www.stats.govt.nz/older-people](http://www.stats.govt.nz/older-people)

## Tables

The following tables can be downloaded from the Statistics New Zealand website in Excel 97 format. If you do not have access to Excel 97 or higher, you may use the [Excel file viewer](#) to view, print and export the contents of the file.

### List of tables

Table 1 Births, deaths and selected rates, 1991-2005