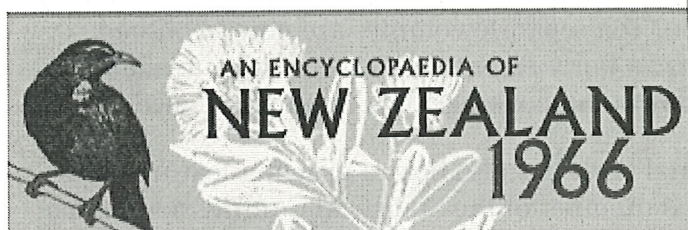




What's the story?

Encyclopedia of New Zealand

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V2

1893

First New Zealand Official Year Book Published

Baker, J., 2009

STATISTICS, OFFICIAL

The first official statistics were collected in New Zealand as early as 1829. From 1840 to 1851, statistical "blue books" were prepared for the Colonial Office, but these were not published. They contained statistics of population of settlements, trade, and agriculture. The compiling authority in the early period was the Colonial Secretary, resident at Auckland. From 1854 the compilation and publication of statistics for the colony as a whole became the responsibility of the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, who was resident in Auckland until 1867 and thereafter in Wellington. The basic statistics of exports and imports continued to be compiled by the Customs Department until 1962, when compilation became the responsibility of the Department of Statistics.

The first general population census was conducted in 1851, since when there have been regular censuses of population, with two exceptions due to the economic depression in the 1930s and to the Second World War. Early censuses were taken triennially, but from 1881 they have been held at quinquennial intervals. The first count of the Maori population was made in 1857–58.

The post of Government Statistician was created in 1910, the first incumbent being attached to the Registrar-General's office. In 1915 a separate Census and Statistics Office was established. It initially formed a branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, but became part of the Department of Industries and Commerce in 1931. A separate department called the Census and Statistics Department was established in 1936, and the name was changed to the Department of Statistics in 1956.

The first official publication of a "yearbook" type appeared in 1875, but it was not until 1893 that the first *New Zealand Official Yearbook* was published. It has since appeared annually (with two exceptions, when combined issues were made). The *Monthly Abstract of Statistics* first appeared in 1914, and has been published regularly since that date. A *Pocket Digest of Statistics* has been produced since 1927.

Over the years there has been a gradual, but nevertheless real, change of emphasis in the importance of the various classes of official statistics in common with the growth and changing structure of the New Zealand economy. The quinquennial census, for example, though no less important than it has ever been, has become only one of many important classes of statistics. The consumers' price index and the estimates of national income and expenditure are two examples of other classes of statistics which have been developed to meet modern needs. The Department of Statistics collects, classifies, compiles, analyses, and publishes a wide range of official statistics, and this flow is supplemented by statistics produced by other Government Departments.

The volume of statistics has, of course, expanded steadily. The first statistical report, a volume entitled *Statistics of New Zealand for 1853, 1854, 1855 and 1856* was issued by the Registrar-General, compiled from official records. It contained statistics of population, migration, external trade, agriculture, public finance, postal business, and prices. Statistical reports have been published regularly since the first report was issued, and new statistical series have been added as the country developed. By 1913 the Statistical Report had grown in size to 890 pages, and was issued in four separate volumes. From 1921 separate annual statistical reports have been issued for the different subjects, and the number had grown to 14 by 1960. Ten separate volumes are now published following each population census. Press releases are a fairly recent means of making available statistical data, as the time factor is no less important than coverage to meet modern needs.

Coordination of official statistics on an international basis has also been a growing feature for a number of years. New Zealand has been an elected member of the Statistical Commission under the Economic and Social Council of United Nations and G. E. F. Wood was chairman of the tenth session in 1958. The fifth Conference of British Commonwealth Statisticians was held in Wellington in November 1960, with J. V. T. Baker as chairman.

Successive Government Statisticians, with dates of appointment, have been: W. M. Wright, 12 December 1910; M. Fraser, 8 March 1911; J. W. Butcher, 1 July 1932; G. E. F. Wood, 10 August 1946; J. V. T. Baker, 26 June 1958.

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