

The Midwife.

Still Fewer Babies Die.

THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE for England and Wales last year fell to 27.6 per 1,000 related live births, the lowest ever recorded in this country. This was 2.0 per 1,000 below that for 1950, the previous lowest.

This new low record is among the provisional vital statistics for 1952 recently published by the Registrar-General. Comparative rates in other countries were: In 1952—Sweden 20, Netherlands 23, U.S.A. 29; in 1951—New Zealand 23, Australia 25, Canada 38, France 51, Belgium 66, Italy 67.

Expectation of Life.

On the basis of 1951 death rates the estimated expectation of life of a male child at birth would be 65.84 years and that of a female child 70.88. These figures compare with 48.53 and 52.38 respectively, in 1901.

Births.

The birth-rate last year was the lowest recorded since 1941. There were 673,559 live births, representing a rate of 15.3 per thousand population. This was 0.2 below the rate for 1951. Of every thousand live births, 46 were illegitimate—5 per thousand less than the average for the preceding five years.

Deaths.

Deaths during 1952 numbered 497,290, representing a rate of 11.3 per thousand population, compared with 12.5 in 1951, and 11.6 in 1950. This is the second lowest rate recorded in spite of a rate in the last quarter (12.4) which has been exceeded only twice since 1925.

Natural Increase.

The births registered in 1952 exceeded the deaths by 176,269; the corresponding excess for 1951 was 130,309 and the average excess for 1946-50 was 281,195.

Marriages.

There were 348,546 marriages in 1952, representing a rate of 15.9 per thousand population, compared with 360,624 and a rate of 16.5 in 1951.

Population Estimates.

Population estimates distinguishing sex and age are shown in this return. The estimate of the total population of England and Wales is given as 44,255,000 at December 31st, 1952.

Northern Ireland Health Statistics.

No Deaths from Diphtheria in 1952.

THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL FOR Northern Ireland states that the general death rate, the infant mortality rate, and the death rate from tuberculosis for 1952 were the lowest ever recorded. For the first time since records have been maintained, no deaths were reported from diphtheria.

The birth rate increased slightly when compared with that for 1951, whilst the marriage rate decreased slightly. The death rate from maternal causes has remained unchanged for the past three years.

The birth rate for 1952 was 20.9 per 1,000 of the population as against 20.7 for the previous year. Although this rate is below the average for the five years 1947-51 it is above the 1939 level of 19.5.

The death rate worked out at 10.8 per 1,000 population: a decrease of 2.0 as compared with the rate for 1951 but it should be remembered that the death rate for 1951 was exceptionally high due to the severe epidemic of influenza which occurred early in that year. The death rate from tuberculosis continued to fall and now stands at 30 per 100,000 of

the population. This rate is approximately one-third of that of 20 years ago.

During the same period the infant mortality rate fell from 83 deaths per 1,000 live births to 39. For the past three years the maternal mortality rate has remained unchanged at 1.1 per 1,000 live births, this being the lowest rate ever recorded for Northern Ireland. In 1932 this rate was 5.3 deaths per 1,000 births.

Regarding diphtheria the fact that no deaths were recorded would appear to indicate that the elimination of this disease is within sight, especially as only four cases were notified during the year. The progress made in conquering diphtheria in the past 10 years was remarkable, considering that in 1942 there were 91 deaths and 1,106 cases recorded.

The death rate from cancer was 147 per 100,000 population, which is the same as the average rate for the five preceding years.

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