

### Subsection 3.—Maternal Mortality

As indicated in Table 1, pp. 236-237, the number of mothers who die in pregnancy and childbirth has been greatly reduced during the past two decades. Although the number of births has been much greater in recent years, the number of maternal deaths declined steadily from 1930 (when there were 1,215 deaths and a rate of almost five deaths for every 1,000 births delivered alive) to a record low of 235 in 1957 followed by a slight rise to 249 in 1958. Since 1945 the rate of maternal mortality has dropped below two per 1,000 live births delivered and has been under one per 1,000 live births since 1951. In 1958, however, there was a slight increase in the rate from 0.52 per 1,000 live births to 0.55. Mortality among unmarried mothers is higher than among married mothers.

**Age at Death.**—Table 16 shows the distribution of maternal deaths by age group and average age at death. The latter is about four years higher than the average age of all mothers at the time of childbirth. The rates per 1,000 live births by age group show that age is a most important factor in maternal mortality. Until very recent years the risk of mortality at childbirth was directly related to the age of the mother; in other words for all mothers of over 20 years the rate rose with increasing age. Though rates for all age groups of mothers have been declining, recently there have been rather significant changes in the rates. Formerly the death rates for mothers in the age group 30-34 was twice or three times as high as the rate for the 20-24 group, but in 1957 and 1958 mortality rates for the four age groups of mothers under 35 years of age were not far apart though after the age of 35 there was a sharp rise.

#### 16.—Maternal Mortality and Rates per 1,000 Live Births, by Age Group, 1956-58

(Exclusive of Newfoundland)

Age Group	Maternal Deaths						Rates per 1,000 Live Births		
	1956		1957		1958		1956	1957	1958
	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.			
Under 20 years.....	12	4.7	10	4.3	12	4.8	0.38	0.29	0.33
20 — 24 “.....	29	11.4	44	18.7	37	14.9	0.24	0.35	0.29
25 — 29 “.....	59	23.1	51	21.7	48	19.3	0.46	0.39	0.36
30 — 34 “.....	59	23.1	34	14.5	41	16.5	0.65	0.37	0.45
35 — 39 “.....	56	22.1	60	25.5	74	29.7	1.14	1.17	1.44
40 — 44 “.....	38	14.9	32	13.6	36	14.5	2.51	2.07	2.42
45 — 49 “.....	2	0.8	4	1.7	1	0.4	1.73	3.39	0.86
50 years or over.....	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Totals, All Ages.....</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.55</b>
Average age at death.....	32.3		31.9		32.4		...	...	...

**Causes of Maternal Deaths.**—Table 17 shows the main causes of maternal deaths during the years 1956-58. Until a decade or so ago, sepsis and toxæmia were by far the most important causes of death of mothers at childbirth. The danger of death from sepsis and other infection has been drastically reduced over the past 15 to 20 years through the use of antibiotics and probably also through increased use of medical services. On the other hand, the number of deaths caused by toxæmia arising during pregnancy was higher in 1958 than in 1957 and is still a major fatal complication of pregnancy. Hæmorrhage, during pregnancy or delivery, which has been another important cause of mortality among mothers, has shown some reduction in recent years.