

New Zealand casualties in overseas wars

Conflict	Period	Number served abroad	Deaths	Total casualties¹
South African War	1899-1902	6500	230	400
First World War	1914-18	100,000	18,166	59,483
Second World War	1939-45	140,000	11,625	36,038
Occupation of Japan ²	1946-49	12,000	15	
Malaya and Borneo conflicts	1949-66	³	33	
Korean War	1950-57	6000	45	c.120
Vietnam War	1965-71	3900	40	c.230
Peacekeeping, including 5 deaths in Timor Leste 1999-2002	1950s-present	⁴	6	
Afghanistan	2001-present	3500	10	

¹ Casualties are service personnel who become 'ineffective' because of death, injury, illness or capture by the enemy. Deaths include deaths from all causes while overseas.

² J-Force was the New Zealand contribution to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan.

³ The official history of New Zealand's military involvement in the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation with Indonesia does not record the total number of personnel sent there.

⁴ Establishing the total number of personnel deployed by New Zealand on peacekeeping missions since the 1950s was beyond the scope of this exercise.

First World War deaths and casualties by campaign

Campaign	Deaths	Total casualties⁵
Gallipoli (1915) ⁶	2750	7500
Egypt/Sinai/Palestine (1916–18)	640	1800
Western Front (1916–18)	12,500	48,000
TOTAL	18,1866	59,483

Second World War deaths and casualties by campaign/arm of service

Campaign	Deaths	Total casualties
Greece (1941)	300	2500
Crete (1941)	670	3800
North Africa (1942-43)	3000	14,000
Italy (1943-45)	2000	8900
Pacific (1943-45)	200	450
RAF/RNZAF (1939–45)	4150	5000
RN/RNZN (1939-45)	570	800
Merchant marine (1939-45)	110	233
TOTAL	11,625	36,038

⁵ Casualties are service personnel who become 'ineffective' because of death, injury, illness or capture by the enemy. Deaths include deaths from all causes while overseas.

⁶ The data for individual campaigns and services in the two World Wars are guesstimates. They do not add up to the official totals for deaths and total casualties in the wars, which were compiled some years later.

- About 60% of New Zealanders who served in the First World War became casualties (i.e., were unable to fight, temporarily or permanently), compared to about 25% of those who served in the Second World War
- Though Gallipoli came to be more prominent in popular memory, the bulk of New Zealand First World War casualties were incurred on the Western Front; 1917 and 1918 saw the highest annual numbers of New Zealand deaths
- In the Second World War airmen, followed by seamen, were the personnel most likely to die if they became casualties – when in action they were more vulnerable than most soldiers, most of the time
- About 500 New Zealanders became prisoners of war during the First World War, compared to more than 9000 during the Second World War. The contrast reflects the static nature of the trench warfare of 1915–18 and the mobility of much of the fighting during the Second World War, especially in Greece and North Africa (1941–43)

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