



MINISTRY OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

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WOMEN RECEIVING DPB WITH ADDITIONAL NEWBORN CHILDREN INCLUDED IN BENEFIT

Purpose of this note, and key findings

- 1 The Welfare Working Group has requested information on women who receive DPB and have subsequent children while on DPB. The information in this note relates to women who receive DPB Sole Parent Benefit or Emergency Maintenance Allowance. See the Appendix for further information on how we have counted additional newborn children included in these benefits.

Key Findings

- A significant number of women on DPB today have had additional newborn children included in their benefit.
- Around 1 in 4 women receiving DPB at June 2009 had had additional newborn children included in DPB in the past, looking back to 1993.¹
- Around 1 in 5 women (22%) receiving DPB at June 2009 had had additional newborn children included in DPB in the past, looking back to 1999.
- When we look at women newly taking up DPB in the year to June 1999, around 1 in 7 had additional newborn children included in DPB at least once over the following 10 years.
- Of those women receiving DPB at June 2009 who had had additional children while on DPB, three quarters had had an additional child added only once, one in five had had additional children added twice and 6% had had additional children added three or more times.

Interpretation of the findings

- 2 We calculated the proportions with additional newborn children included in benefit looking backwards for clients receiving DPB at June 2009 (1 in 4 since 1993, 1 in 5 since 1999), and looking forwards for women newly entering DPB in the year to June 1999² (1 in 7 in the following 10 years).
- 3 These “looking backwards” and “looking forwards” proportions differ in scale because those who stay longer than average on DPB (who are also more likely than average to have additional children) have a high representation among those currently receiving DPB.
- 4 Compared to those receiving DPB at any point in time, new entrants are a more diverse group. A number only stay on DPB for short periods before leaving (eg to take up employment, or because they form a relationship).

¹ At June 2009, 22,416 women aged 18-64 receiving DPB had previously had additional newborn children included in their benefit.

² Where a new entrant is defined as a person granted DPB having not received that benefit in the preceding four years.

- 5 Some newborn children may be included in these benefits as a result of adoption, fostering or a whāngai arrangement, but generally we assume that the sole mother is the birth mother.
- 6 Having a child while in receipt of DPB is not inconsistent with current DPB eligibility rules. To qualify for DPB a female sole parent must meet statutory requirements, such as residence, and one of the following:
 - be living apart from their partner and have lost the support of (or be inadequately maintained by) the spouse/partner
 - had their marriage or civil union dissolved/divorced
 - be single (never had a partner)
 - meet certain other requirements, eg partner imprisoned.
- 7 Several factors relating to family formation in New Zealand are likely to be relevant in considering the above findings. These include:
 - a significant proportion of all NZ births occur outside of a legal or a de facto relationship. In 2007, 18% of all NZ births occurred outside of a legal or de facto relationship (based on birth registrations data).
 - some of the pregnancies are likely to have been unplanned.
- 8 It is also possible that the incentives to re-partner, stay single, or live together have some effect on the behaviour of sole parent mothers and the fathers of the new children (e.g. different entitlements for singles and couples).
- 9 Overseas studies suggest that it is not uncommon for continuing lone parents to have had new babies. A UK Study found that 1 in 5 of continuing lone parents in the study had had new babies in the seven years of the study. The study also noted that such births were often the outcome of new relationships that at one stage promised a new partnership.³

³ UK Department of Work and Pensions (2000) The British Lone Parent Cohort 1991 to 1998, Research Report No 128, p.138.

Appendix: Methodology for counting additional newborn children included in benefit

These estimates:

- look at all the times women have been on DPB in the time frame considered
- only count children who were conceived while the caregiver was receiving DPB
- count two or more newborn children included at the same time as a result of a multiple birth only once
- count only newborns who were included in benefit on the day of their birth or within four weeks of birth and were still included in benefit three months after their birth
- are not able to separately identify whether these newborn children were added to benefit as a result of an adoption or a whāngai or foster arrangement.

The estimates use data from the MSD Information Analysis Platform (IAP) and the Benefit Dynamics Dataset.

Other data sources

The latest birth data registration form collects information about the parent's relationship status. Of the 64,000 births in 2007, 53 percent of mothers were legally married or in a civil union, 29 percent were in a de facto (cohabiting) relationship, and 18 percent were in neither a legal nor a de facto relationship.⁴ Data on whether births are first or subsequent births are only available for births within marriage.

⁴ MSD (2008) *Children and Young People: Indicators of Wellbeing in New Zealand*.