



10 MAY 2016

Mr Jonathan King  
Auckland Action Against Poverty  
[fyi-request-3888-a6dd88d8@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-3888-a6dd88d8@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Mr King

On 12 April 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *The number of sole parents currently subject to reductions in the rates of their benefit payments under Section 70a of the Social Security Act, broken down by total number and percentage according to:*
  - (a) *Gender*
  - (b) *Age*
  - (c) *Ethnicity*
  - (c) *How many reductions are currently applied to that sole parent's benefit payments under Section 70a*
  - (d) *Whether 70a(5) has been applied (a further \$6 reduction per week)*
  - (e) *Which clause in 70a(2) has been applied (a, b, or c)*
  - (f) *As a percentage of sole parents currently receiving one of the benefit payments listed in 70a(1)(b)*
  
- *The number of cases in the last 12 months in which reductions under Section 70a(2) have not been applied, or reductions have been stopped, as a result of reference to the clauses in 70a(3). Please break these down by total number and percentage according to which clause has been applied (a, b, ba, bb, or c).*

From 15 July 2013, those in receipt of a Domestic Purposes Benefit – Sole Parent moved to Sole Parent Support or, for those whose youngest child is aged between 14 and 18 years of age, to Jobseeker Support.

Under section 70A of the Social Security Act 1964, people who apply for a sole parent rate of benefit have a legal obligation to make a Child Support Application under the Child Support Act for each dependent child and identify the paying parents. However there are certain circumstances where a person does not have to apply for Child Support, for example, where the paying parent is deceased; where the parent caring for the child or children would be at risk of violence if they took steps to meet their Child Support obligations; where the paying partner is in prison; or the child was conceived as a result of sexual violation.

If a person refuses to apply for Child Support, or identify the other paying parent for a reason other than the exemptions above, their rate of benefit payment will be reduced under section 70A of the Social Security Act 1964 by \$22 per week for each dependent child that the client has not met their obligations for.

When a person has had a section 70A deduction imposed for at least 13 weeks they will have their benefit further reduced by an additional \$6 per week if they have not met these obligations. This further \$6 reduction can only be applied once regardless of how many dependent children the person has. For more information, I have provided you with a website link to the Work and Income website: <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/legislation/acts/social-security-act-1964/section-70a-rates-of-benefits-for-sole-parents-may.html>

Please find enclosed six tables which provide you with a breakdown of the number of sole parents who are subject to a reduction in their rates of benefit under section 70A of the Social Security Act 1964. The tables provide you with the number of sole parents with a section 70A child support deduction broken down by gender, age, ethnicity, the number of deductions, the benefit they receive and the reasons a reduction has not been applied (exemption).

Under section 70A, a client may be granted an exemption for the following five reasons, table six provides you with the number of clients who have had an exemption and the reason for such exemption:

- Taking Active Steps - the beneficiary is taking active steps to identify who is in law the other parent.
- Insufficient Evidence – there is insufficient evidence available to establish who is in law the other parent;
- Conception Issues - the child was conceived as a result of incest or sexual violation.
- Violence - the beneficiary or any of the beneficiary's children would be at risk of violence if the beneficiary carried out or took steps to carry out any of the actions referred to in subparagraphs (i) to (iii) of subsection (1)(c).
- Compelling Circumstances - there is a compelling circumstance, other than a circumstance mentioned elsewhere in this subsection, for the beneficiary's failure or refusal to carry out any of the actions set out in subparagraphs (i) to (iii) of subsection (1)(c), and, even if the beneficiary carried out the action, there is no real likelihood of child support being collected in the foreseeable future from the other parent, or, as the case may be, the other parent's estate.

Unfortunately I am unable to provide you with the numbers broken down to the sections 70A(2)(a), 70A(2)(b) and 70A(2)(c) of the Social Security Act. The Ministry does not report on these deductions in the detail you have requested. As such this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act as this information does not exist.

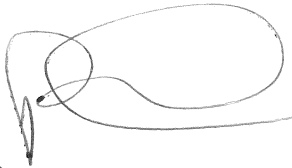
I am unable to provide you with the number of people who have had the additional \$6 reduction (section 70A(5)) applied as this is found on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

I hope you find this information regarding Child Disability payments helpful. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 10-152  
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely



Ruth Bound  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery**

**Table 1: Working age sole parents on Job Seeker or Sole Parent Support with a section 70A child support deduction by gender as at the end of March 2016:**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Percentage of Clients</b>
Female	13,298	97.7%
Male	318	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,616</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Working age sole parents on Job Seeker or Sole Parent Support with a Section 70A child support deduction by age as at the end of March 2016:**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Percentage of Clients</b>
18-19	241	1.8%
20-24	2,952	21.7%
25-29	3,634	26.7%
30-34	2,674	19.6%
35-39	1,890	13.9%
40-44	1,214	8.9%
45-49	628	4.6%
50-54	262	1.9%
55-59	92	0.7%
60-64	29	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,616</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3: Working age sole parents on Job Seeker or Sole Parent Support with a Section 70A child support deduction by prioritised ethnicity as at the end of March 2016:**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>	<b>Percentage of Clients</b>
Maori	7,195	52.8%
NZ European	3,346	24.6%
Pacific Island	1,895	13.9%
Other	987	7.2%
Unspecified	193	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,616</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4: Working age sole parents on Job Seeker or Sole Parent Support with a Section 70A child support deduction by number of deductions as at the end of March 2016:**

Number of Deductions	Number of Clients	Percentage of Clients
1	10,848	79.7%
2	2,189	16.1%
3	476	3.5%
4	82	0.6%
5 or more	21	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,616</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 5: The number of clients with a Section 70A child support deduction as a percentage of working age sole parents on Job Seeker or Sole Parent Support as at the end of March 2016:**

Benefit	Number of Clients with a Section 70A Deduction	Number of Working Age Sole Parents	Percentage of Working Age Sole Parents with a Section 70A deduction
Job Seeker	852	10,638	8.0%
Sole Parent Support	12,764	66,387	19.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,616</b>	<b>77,025</b>	<b>17.7%</b>

**Table 6: Working age sole parents on Job Seeker or Sole Parent Support with a Section 70A child support exemption by exemption reason as at the end of March 2016:**

Exemption Reason	Number of Clients
Taking Active Steps	1,106
Insufficient Evidence	683
Conception Issues	204
Violence	533
Compelling Circumstances	354
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,825</b>

**Notes applied to all tables above:**

Other ethnicities include Other Europeans, Asian peoples and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African people.

Working age clients is 18-64 year old clients.

Sole parents on Job Seeker includes single clients with children included in their benefit.

Demographics are for the client, not the children to whom the deductions are applied.

SPS is Sole Parent Support.

Some clients can be counted twice in the table if they have more than one child with a section 70a exemption for different reasons, however they will only be counted in the total once.