

Pacific People in Aotearoa

Insights from the Growing up in New Zealand Study

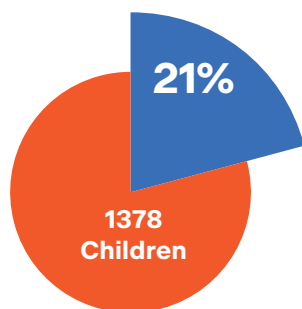
This factsheet highlights the strengths and challenges for Pacific young people and families living in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the vital role of culture, language, and family in helping them thrive.



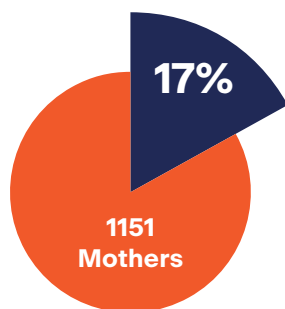
Our Pacific families in the study

Ethnicity connects you to your family, your island, and your stories. It helps shape how you see the world and is something to be proud of, because it carries the strength and beauty of your people.

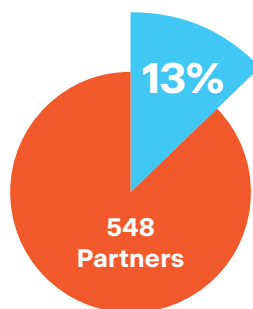
Growing Up in New Zealand began with **6,814 mothers** and **4,158 partners**.



21% of children identified as Pacific



17% of mothers identified as Pacific



13% of partners identified as Pacific



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Pacific young people identified with many different heritages

Pacific ethnicities at 12 years **17%** (728)

Samoaan **47%** (345)

Tongan **31%** (228)

Cook Islands Māori **25%** (180)

Niuean **13%** (92)

Fijian **7%** (49)

Other Pacific peoples (e.g., Tokelauan) **5%** (35)

30%

identified with **more than one ethnicity**, showing the rich diversity within Pacific families.

Cultural connectedness

Cultural connectedness means feeling close to your culture, like celebrating your traditions, being proud of where your family comes from and your language.

Pacific young people feel good about their ethnic identity and connection to their culture. Pacific young people at age 12:



were happy with the cultural group they belong to.



felt good about their cultural or ethnic background.



had a lot of pride in their ethnic group.



Relationships and family life

Family relationships help shape who you are and can give you a sense of belonging. These are the people who know you best and stand by you no matter what.

At 9 months:

- **91%** of mothers sang or told stories to their children daily.
- **41%** had grandparents as their main carer.
- **81%** of mothers read to their babies.

40%+

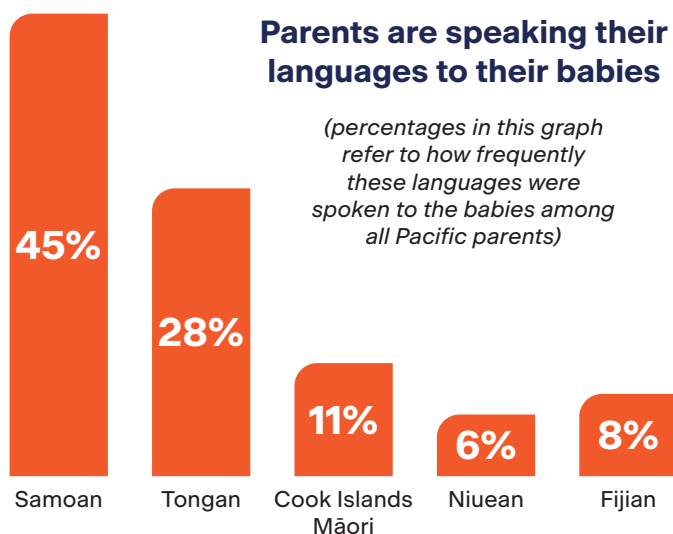
lived in extended family households during the pre-school years.

Important adults in the lives of Pacific young people

Aunt or Uncle	66%	Grandparent	64%	Other relative or family	37%
Brother or sister (>18 years)	34%	Teacher	32%	My parent's friend	18%
My friend's parent	16%	Coach or activity leader	11%	Neighbour	5%

Pacific languages

Languages carry the stories, values, and traditions of our ancestors, and they help us stay connected to our culture and identity.

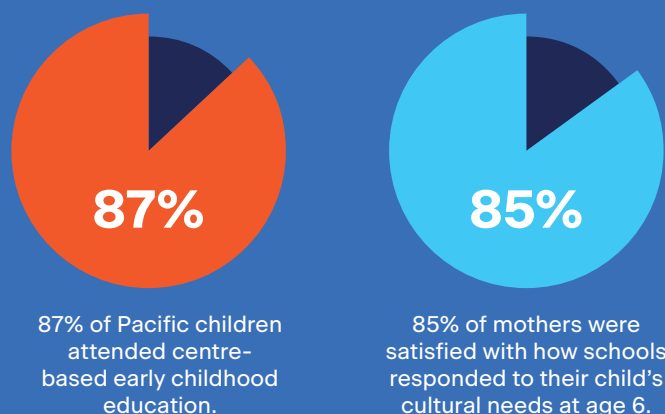


Parents spoke non-English languages mainly because it was their strongest language (40%) or because they wanted their child to grow up bilingual (17% of mothers).



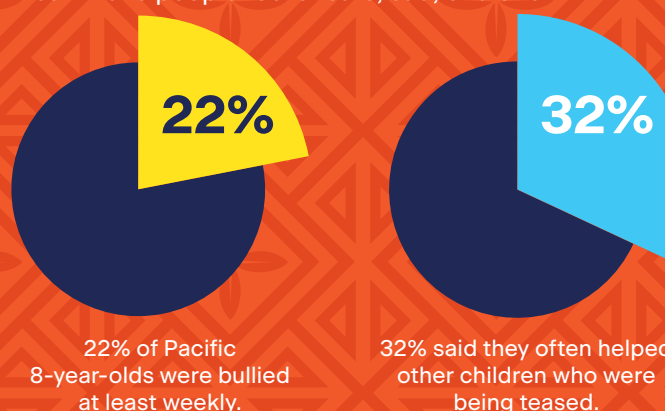
Experiences of education and schooling

Early childhood education helps children grow in confidence and skills, and the transition to school is an exciting step into new teachers, routines, and learning.



Bullying

Bullying is when someone or a group of people keep hurting, picking on, or putting down others on purpose. It can make people feel unsafe, sad, or alone.



Disability

Disability means having a physical, learning, or health condition that can make everyday tasks harder.

14.5% of Pacific 12-year-olds reported a disability.

The Growing Up in New Zealand study shows the strengths of Pacific children and families in culture, language, and traditions. These insights call on policymakers to act to promote and support Pacific young people to thrive.

At the same time, Growing Up in New Zealand is also revealing inequities and challenges in health and living conditions for the Pacific cohort. By sharing this information, Growing Up in New Zealand helps shine a light on these injustices so that leaders and policymakers can support communities to create a fairer future and help to make Aotearoa New Zealand a better place to call home.

Mental health

Our data shows that Pacific children and young people are carrying a heavier load than the rest of the cohort when it comes to mental health issues. Knowing this helps highlight the pressures Pacific young people face, so decision-makers can better understand what needs to change.

Pacific children carried higher levels of depression and anxiety than other young people.

At age 8:

- Pacific children had the **highest average levels for depression and anxiety symptoms.**

At age 12:

- **Levels of depression symptoms stayed high** for Pacific young people, while they had a small decrease in anxiety symptoms compared to 8-years.



Living conditions

Pacific families face more hardship in their living conditions than others in the study.

At age 8

- **1 in 4 Pacific children lived in material hardship**, meaning their families were lacking or going without without essentials like food, heating, or proper housing.
- **Over 40% of families sometimes or always ran out of food**, and 7% went to school without lunch several days a week.
- **66% lived in high-deprivation areas** - places where access to services, healthy housing, and opportunities are limited.

At age 12

- **23.5% were still living in hardship**, though they made up only 16.7% of the study group.



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