



Waipapa
Taumata Rau
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Growing Up
in New Zealand

Data factsheet: identity and belonging

2026



Making Aotearoa a better place to call home

Introduction to Growing Up in New Zealand

Growing Up in New Zealand is a contemporary longitudinal study of New Zealand children and their families, launched on 1 February 2008. The overarching objective of the study is to generate policy-relevant evidence to optimise children's developmental trajectories in multiple areas, including health, education and social and cognitive functioning.¹ *Growing Up in New Zealand* has enrolled approximately 18,000 participants (6,822 mothers, 4,401 partners and 6,853 children). Data was first collected during the mothers' last trimester of pregnancy, and subsequent major data collection waves occurred at 9 months, 2 years, 4.5 years, 8 years, 12 years and 15 years.

Policy priority: identity and belonging

- Identity and belonging are important components of child and youth wellbeing. Young people's sense of belonging and their experiences of support for identity are indicators in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy,² and connection to identity and culture is part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissions' He Ara Oranga wellbeing outcomes framework.³ Cultural capability and belonging is also a wellbeing domain of the Treasury's Living Standards Framework.⁴
- *Growing Up in New Zealand* can provide robust contemporary evidence on a range of topics related to identity and belonging. The study collects data on both children and parents' identity, connection to culture, experiences of racism and discrimination, as well as wellbeing outcomes that are related to identity and belonging. In addition, the study collects ethnicity and gender identity data, enabling disaggregated analyses for more equitable outcomes.

¹ Morton SMB, Ramke J, Kinloch J, Grant CC, Atatoa Carr P, Leeson H et al. Growing Up in New Zealand cohort alignment with all New Zealand births. *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2015 Feb;39(1):82-87.

² Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. Wellington: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; 2019. 1-89.

³ He Ara Oranga wellbeing outcomes framework. Wellington: Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission; 2022.

⁴ Te Tai Ōhanga The Treasury. The Living Standards Framework 2021. Wellington: Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government; 2021. 1-69.

How can Growing Up in New Zealand contribute to the Government's policy priorities?

Policy area	Measured construct	Data collection wave							Example measures	
		AN	9M	2Y	4.5Y	8Y	12Y	15Y*		
Identity	Child	Ethnicity	█	█		█	█	█	█	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which ethnic group or groups do you belong to? Are you descended from a Māori? Do you know the name(s) of your iwi (tribe/tribes)? Which ethnic group do other people usually classify you in? Do you see yourself as a boy, a girl, or somewhere in the middle?
		Māori descent/iwi affiliation						█		
		Socially assigned ethnicity				█				
		Gender identity					█	█		
		Gender expression					█			
	Parent	Ethnicity	█	█		█			█	
		Māori descent/iwi affiliation		█						
Socially assigned ethnicity							█			
Connected to culture	Child	Cultural identity development				█	█			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How often caregivers discuss their child's ethnicity or culture with them How involved they are in cultural activities Whether they have a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic or cultural group What values are most important to their child's development Whether they belong to any religion or denomination How often they attend religious services
		Cultural knowledge, participation and values						█	█	
		Traditional/cultural practices				█				
		Cultural activities			█		█			
		Religious affiliation/participation					█	█		

Policy area	Measured construct	Data collection wave							Example measures	
		AN	9M	2Y	4.5Y	8Y	12Y	15Y*		
Parent	Languages exposed to	■	■						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether they feel like they belong in their community What languages they normally speak at home What languages their child understands and/or speaks 	
	Languages understood/spoken			■	■	■	■	■		
	Te reo Māori comprehension and use					■	■			
	Cultural knowledge, participation and values	■	■		■					
	New Zealand cultural practices	■			■					
	Traditional/cultural practices	■		■						
	Values and beliefs		■							
	Religious affiliation/participation			■						
	Spirituality			■						
	Sense of community belonging	■	■							
Community participation	■	■								
Racism and discrimination	Child						■	■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfair treatment because of age, skin colour, way of dress or appearance, race or ethnic group, accent or language spoken, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disability or health issues or any other reason Attitudes towards ethnic diversity 	
	Parent	Experiences of racism and discriminatory behaviour	■		■					
		Expressions of racism and discriminatory behaviour			■					

* Note: The 15Y DCW was a checkpoint (primarily to engage/retain the cohort) not a full Data collection wave

Constructs related to identity and belonging

Growing Up in New Zealand also collects data on factors related to identity and belonging.

Domain	Constructs related to identity and belonging
Education	Choice and utilisation of educational services, parental beliefs and expectations, teacher expectations, recognition, teacher-student relationship, language and identity
Family and whānau	Family structure, parenting attitudes and perceptions, parenting practices and styles, parent expectations, parenting support, family cohesion
Health and wellbeing	Availability and access to health services and information, child health, family health, parental health, family eating behaviour and patterns
Psychological and cognitive development	Anxiety, depression, loneliness, perceived stress, life satisfaction, resilience, social support and coping, peer relationships
Societal context	Parents' cultural knowledge, material wellbeing, employment, sense of neighbourhood belonging, neighbourhood engagement, use of local services, housing affordability

Using Growing Up in New Zealand data

1. Growing Up in New Zealand has four main objectives:

- To map the developmental trajectories for a cohort of New Zealand children as a group and within Māori, Pacific and Asian subgroups in particular, across multiple levels of influence (political, social, cultural, intergenerational, familial and individual) for outcomes in key social, developmental and health domains across the lifecycle.
- To provide a description of cross-sectional outcomes (in several domains) at key points in the lifecycle of the developing child to enable subgroup-specific analyses and comparisons with international populations.
- To focus on factors and trajectories, across multiple levels of influence, that confer resilience and optimise development, rather than focusing solely on risk factors for poor outcomes.
- To identify critical or sensitive periods in development, and levels of influence, that will allow the development of policy directed at optimising the development of every child born in New Zealand.

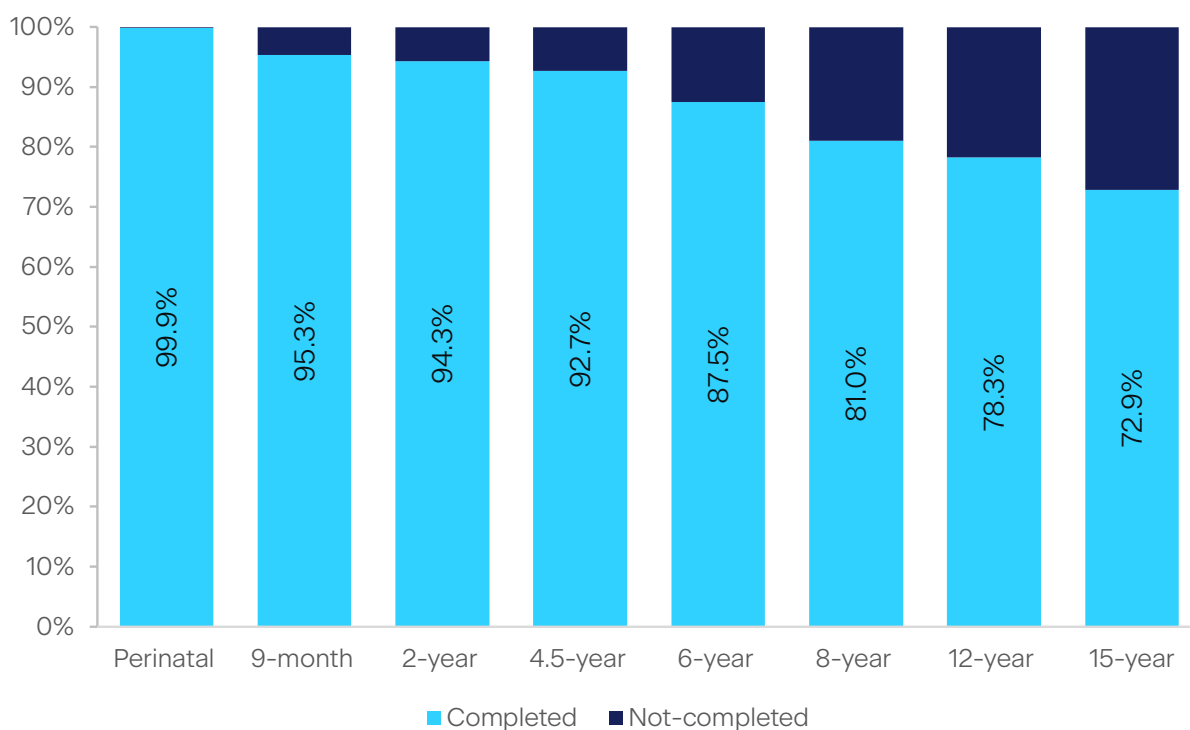


Figure 1. Longitudinal completion rate over time as a proportion of eligible cohort for each data collection wave

2. Growing Up in New Zealand has several unique features that make it an important resource for policy development.

- It is the first population-based longitudinal study in New Zealand to begin data collection from before birth, which accounts for the importance of the antenatal period for children's developmental pathways.
- The cohort is unique in terms of its size and diversity to provide evidence across multiple domains of influence on development for New Zealand children. It includes significant numbers of Māori, Pacific and Asian children, which makes analyses within these ethnic groups possible.
- Information is gathered from mothers and their partners from the earliest time point so that the evolving nature of the New Zealand family can be tracked alongside that of our growing children.
- The study has ongoing engagement with the policy sector to ensure the collected data links to areas of cross-sectoral policy focus for children and families.
- Data collected from *Growing Up in New Zealand* is intended to be used widely. Clear data access protocols govern the study to safeguard participants' ongoing involvement, privacy and confidentiality.
- Some identity and belonging constructs have been measured longitudinally, which can help identify critical periods during cognitive development.

3. Growing Up in New Zealand can provide evidence through:

- Fast track requests – simple cross-tabulations to answer a specific policy-relevant query
- Policy briefs – maximum four-page policy briefs on specific topics
- Bespoke, comprehensive reports for government agencies
- Collaborative projects between government agencies and *Growing Up in New Zealand* researchers

4. Datasets available

Datasets are currently available from antenatal to the 12-year data collection wave. Additionally, we have data available from smaller data collection waves at 6 weeks, 16 months, 23 months, 31 months, 45 months, 72 months, a specific COVID-19 survey at 10 years, and Extreme Weather Event (EWE) survey at 13 years. The 15-year data collection wave data will become available April 2026.

Further resources

A range of existing resources based on our research findings can be found on our website, including:

- [Policy briefs](#): smaller publications on a specific topic of interest to policymakers and government. growingup.co.nz/growing-policy-briefs
- [Reports](#): comprehensive reports based on data collected at key milestones. growingup.co.nz/growing-reports
- [Published articles](#): *Growing Up in New Zealand* researchers use the study data to investigate a wide range of topics around child and youth development. growingup.co.nz/published-articles

For more information, please email researchgrowingup@auckland.ac.nz or visit our website at growingup.co.nz

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