



Waipapa
Taumata Rau
University
of Auckland

Growing Up
in New Zealand

Data factsheet: Family wellbeing

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: family wellbeing

- The New Zealand Government has a range of policy priorities related to family wellbeing. Safe, loving families and prevention of harm are focus areas of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy² and He Ara Oranga wellbeing outcomes framework.³ Te Aorerekura national strategy⁴ and the Ministry of Justice Statement of Intent seek to address family violence.⁵ The importance of family and whānau is also recognised in the Treasury's Living Standards Framework.⁶
- Growing Up in New Zealand can provide robust contemporary evidence on a range of topics related to family wellbeing. The study collects data on measures of parenting and the family environment as well as constructs related to family wellbeing.
- The table on the following page provides an overview of parenting and family constructs that Growing Up in New Zealand has collected at each data collection wave, with some examples of items from our questionnaires.

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 Aorerekura: the national strategy to eliminate family violence and sexual violence. Wellington: Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa, 2021. 1-78.

⁵ Tāhu o te ture statement of intent 2019 to 2024. Wellington: Ministry of Justice; 2020. 1-41.

⁶ 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 questions
		AN	9M	2Y	4.5Y	8Y	12Y	15Y*	
Family structure	Household composition	█	█		█	█	█	█	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of household and their relationship to the child Whether people in your family/whānau support each other at difficult times Whether there is commotion in the home Whether the child lives in two or more households
	Family living situation						█		
	Family cohesion	█						█	
	Sibling relationships				█			█	
	Extended family relationships				█			█	
	Gender roles/division of labour			█					
	Family environment					█		█	
	Special adult relationships							█	
Parenting	Child parent relationship					█	█	█	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the current barriers to you being more involved with your child? How often do you feel that you have enough support for parenting your child? How often do you tell your child how happy they make you?
	Parental involvement	█	█		█	█	█		
	Parent expectations		█						
	Child role and responsibilities (e.g., care for others, money, chores)					█	█	█	
	Parental and family stress	█	█					█	
	Parenting practices				█			█	

Policy area	Measured construct	Data collection wave							Example questions	
		AN	9M	2Y	4.5Y	8Y	12Y	15Y*		
	Parenting support	█	█				█	█		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental knowledge of child's behaviours and activities • Does your child keep a lot of secrets from you about what they do? • Whether the parent used physical punishment • Do you have enough support for parenting your child?
	Work-family life balance		█		█	█	█	█		
	Parent-child interactions			█	█	█				
	Parental monitoring/ autonomy							█		
	Quality/quantity of interactions		█	█	█			█		
	Violence towards children						█	█		
	Parent-child interactions							█		
	Discipline							█		
	Hopes and dreams	█	█		█	█	█	█	█	
	Relationship status	█	█		█	█	█	█		
Inter-parental relationships	Commitment	█	█						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often your child was present when you had a physical conflict with your partner • Positive aspects of the relationship • How often do you disagree with the other parent about basic parenting issues? 	
	Conflict		█	█	█	█	█			
	Interparental violence		█	█	█	█	█			
	Warmth and hostility	█	█	█	█	█	█			
	Co-parenting							█		

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

Constructs related to family wellbeing

Growing Up in New Zealand also collects data on factors related to family wellbeing.

Domain	Constructs related to family wellbeing
Culture and identity	Traditional/cultural practices, cultural values and beliefs
Education	School attendance, academic performance, academic resilience, choice and utilization of educational services
Family and whānau	Family relationships and structure, parent-child interactions, parent-child trust, parenting practices, parenting attitudes, parent expectations
Health and wellbeing	Health status, health-related quality of life, physical activity, sleep, sedentary behaviours, infectious diseases, health care
Psychological and cognitive development	Anxiety, depression, resilience, personality, perceived stress, life satisfaction
Societal context	Material wellbeing, household income, parental employment, housing quality, severe housing deprivation

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 lifecourse.
- To provide a description of cross-sectional outcomes (in several domains) at key points in the lifecourse 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.

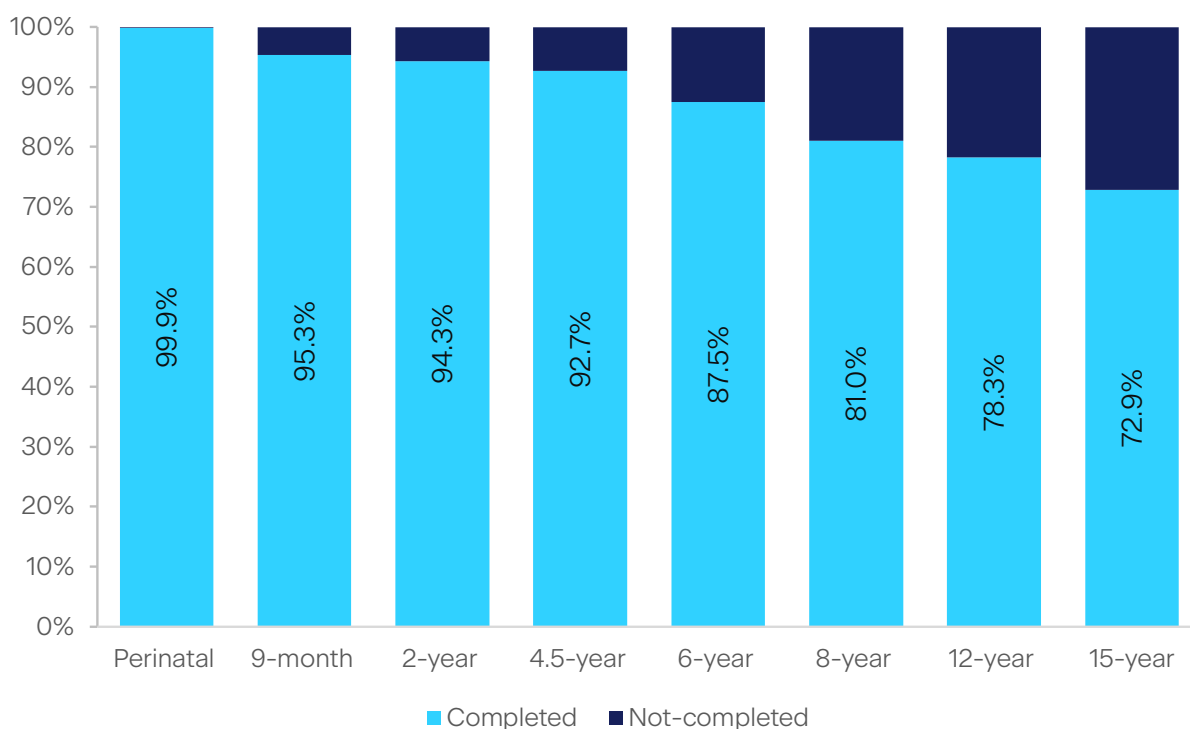


Figure 1. Longitudinal completion rate over time as a proportion of eligible cohort for each data collection wave

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 family wellbeing 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

© *Growing Up in New Zealand* 2026