



Waipapa  
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**Growing Up**  
in New Zealand

# Data factsheet: housing and communities

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.<sup>1</sup> *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: housing and communities

- Housing is a key determinant of child health. Poor housing quality and household overcrowding are risk factors for various infectious diseases and respiratory diseases.<sup>2-3</sup> Tenure security can reduce residential mobility and contribute to a child's sense of stability and community.<sup>4</sup> Children's neighbourhood environment can determine their access to a range of other resources.<sup>5</sup>
- Access to affordable, safe and stable housing is a wellbeing objective for the Budget 2023<sup>6</sup> and an indicator of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.<sup>7</sup> Warm and dry housing, thriving communities and secure tenure are also key focus areas of the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development.<sup>8</sup>
- *Growing Up in New Zealand* can provide robust contemporary evidence on a variety of topics related to children's housing and community context. The study measures a range of housing and community indicators, as well as factors that contribute to a child's housing context.

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<sup>1</sup> Morton SMB, Ramke J, Kinloch J, Grant CC, Ataoa 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.

<sup>2</sup> Mendell MJ, Mirer AG, Cheung K, Tong M, Douwes J. Respiratory and allergic health effects of dampness, mold, dampness-related agents: a review of the epidemiologic evidence. *Environ Health Perspect*. 2011;119:748-756.

<sup>3</sup> Baker MG, McDonald A, Zhang J, Howden-Chapman P. Infectious diseases and attributable to household crowding in New Zealand: a systematic review and burden of disease estimate. Wellington: He Kainga Ora/Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago; 2013. 1-80.

<sup>4</sup> Scanlon E, Devine K. Residential mobility and youth well-being: research, policy, and practice issues. *The J Sociol Soc Welf*. 2001;28:119-138.

<sup>5</sup> Pearce J, Witten K, Bartie, P. Neighbourhoods and health: a GIS approach to community resource accessibility. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2006;60:389-395.

<sup>6</sup> Budget 2023: Budget Policy Statement. Wellington: Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government; 2022. 1-28.

<sup>7</sup> Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. Wellington: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; 2019. 1-89.

<sup>8</sup> Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development. Wellington: Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government; 2021. 1-54.

# 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*		
Housing quality	Housing condition									<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the house is overcrowded</li> <li>• What forms of heating they use</li> <li>• Issues with keeping house warm or cool</li> <li>• Issues with dampness and mould</li> <li>• Whether their house is insulated</li> <li>• Sources and treatment of drinking water</li> </ul>
	Household crowding									
	Heating/keeping house warm									
	Cooling/keeping house cool									
	Dampness and mould									
	Insulation									
	Drinking water quality <sup>9</sup>									
Affordable and secure housing	Housing tenure									<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether they live in a family-owned home, private rental or public housing</li> <li>• How often they have moved house</li> <li>• Experiences of homelessness</li> </ul>
	Housing costs									
	Residential mobility									
	Severe housing deprivation									
Thriving communities	Sense of neighbourhood belonging									<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether they like living where they live</li> <li>• Whether it is safe to walk around the neighbourhood at night</li> <li>• Whether they feel like they belong in their communities</li> <li>• Whether their main social networks are local or non-local</li> <li>• How long they intend to stay in their neighbourhood</li> </ul>
	Neighbourhood engagement									
	Neighbourhood characteristics									
	Use of local services									
	Neighbourhood preferences									
	Intent to stay in neighbourhood									
	Independence of child									

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

<sup>9</sup> Drinking water quality questions were asked at the 23-month data collection wave

# Constructs related to housing and communities

*Growing Up in New Zealand* also collects data on factors related to housing and communities.

Domain	Constructs related to housing and communities
<b>Education</b>	Choice and utilisation of educational services, transitions between educational settings
<b>Family and whānau</b>	Child relationships with other caregivers, extended family relationships, intergenerational relationships
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	Activity and exercise, availability and access to health services, infectious diseases, respiratory disorders, skin infections in household, stress in early childhood
<b>Psychological and cognitive development</b>	Anxiety, depression, loneliness, perceived stress, life satisfaction, resilience, social support and coping
<b>Societal context</b>	Economic capital, transport mode, household socioeconomic status, finance, material wellbeing, parental education, work

## 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.

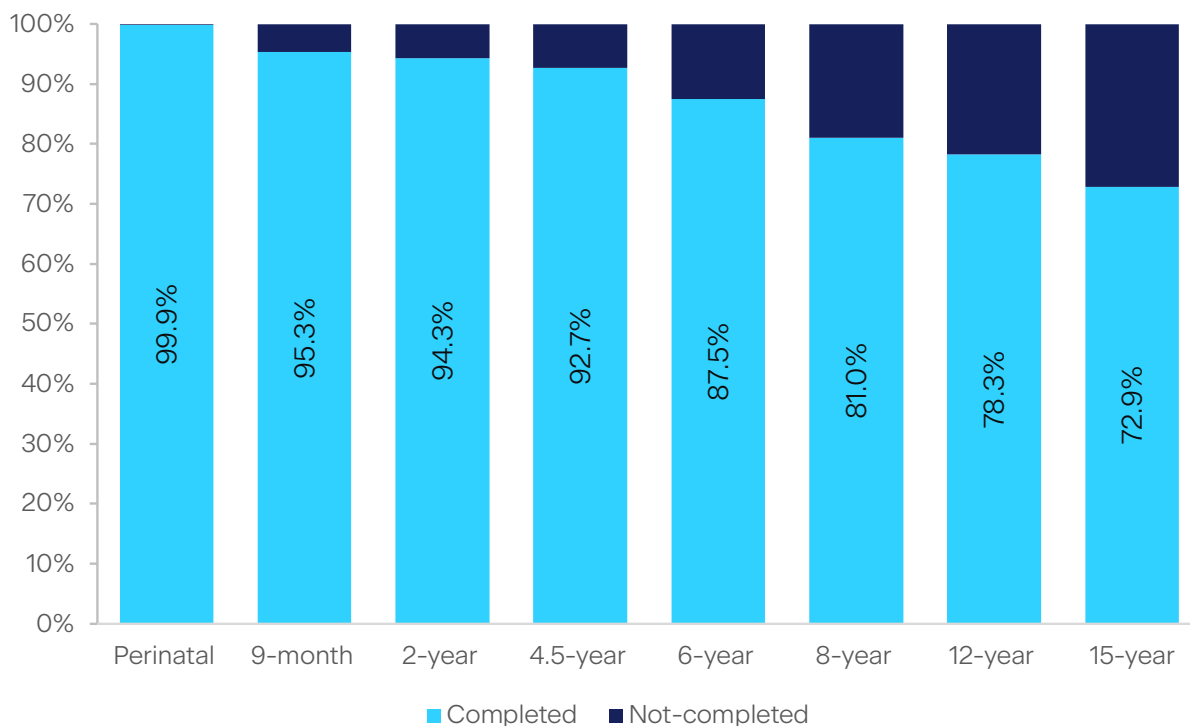


Figure 1. Longitudinal completion rate over time as a proportion of eligible cohort for each data collection wave

## 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 housing and communities 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](https://growingup.co.nz/growing-policy-briefs)
- [Reports](#): comprehensive reports based on data collected at key milestones. [growingup.co.nz/growing-reports](https://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](https://growingup.co.nz/published-articles)

For more information, please email [researchgrowingup@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:researchgrowingup@auckland.ac.nz) or visit our website at [growingup.co.nz](https://growingup.co.nz)

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