



Waipapa
Taumata Rau
University
of Auckland

 **Growing Up**
in New Zealand

Data factsheet: child health

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: child health

- Child health is a key policy priority for the New Zealand Government. Physical and child wellbeing are both objectives for the Budget 2023,² and child health is a focus area in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.³
- Growing Up in New Zealand can provide robust contemporary evidence on a range of topics related to child health. The study measures child health outcomes, access to health services and parental health as well as other factors that may contribute to child health.

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 Budget 2023: Budget Policy Statement. Wellington: Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government; 2022. 1-28.

³ Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. Wellington: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; 2019. 1-89.

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*		
Improving child health	Health-related quality of life									<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your child have any allergies? • Has your child received their immunisations? • Has your child ever been diagnosed with rheumatic fever? • How many courses of antibiotics has your child had? • Whether the child is taking any medications to slow or delay puberty • Pubertal development score • Feelings about puberty • How often the child drinks alcohol • If the child has ever tried vaping, cigarettes or cannabis • How often does your child participate in sport? • How much time does your child spend asleep at night in total?
	Self-perception of health status									
	Allergies									
	Audiology									
	Hygiene									
	Immunisations									
	Infant/child health status									
	Infectious diseases									
	Injury									
	Disability (physical, intellectual)									
	Health-related quality of life									
	Medications (incl. antibiotics)									
	Oral health									
	Puberty									
	Exposure to harmful substances									
	Sunlight exposure									
	Activity and exercise									
	Sleep									

Policy area	Measured construct	Data collection wave							Example measures
		AN	9M	2Y	4.5Y	8Y	12Y	15Y*	
Access to services	Antenatal health care	■							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well Child Tamariki Ora • School health services • General practitioner • Disability and learning difficulty support • Oral health
	Enablers and barriers to healthcare use	■	■	■	■	■	■		
	Postnatal health care	■	■		■				
	Primary health care	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
	Health information sources	■	■				■		

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

Constructs related to child health

Growing Up in New Zealand also collects data on factors related to child health.

Domain	Constructs related to child health
Culture and identity	Experiences of racism, gender identity, body image
Education	Choice and utilisation of educational services, literacy, numeracy, academic performance, academic self-belief/mindset
Family and whānau	Parental and family stress, violence towards children
Psychological and cognitive development	Conduct and behaviour, social competence, mental health, sensorimotor functions, motivation and emotion
Societal context	Access to non-household resources, housing quality, household tenure, material wellbeing, household crowding, 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.

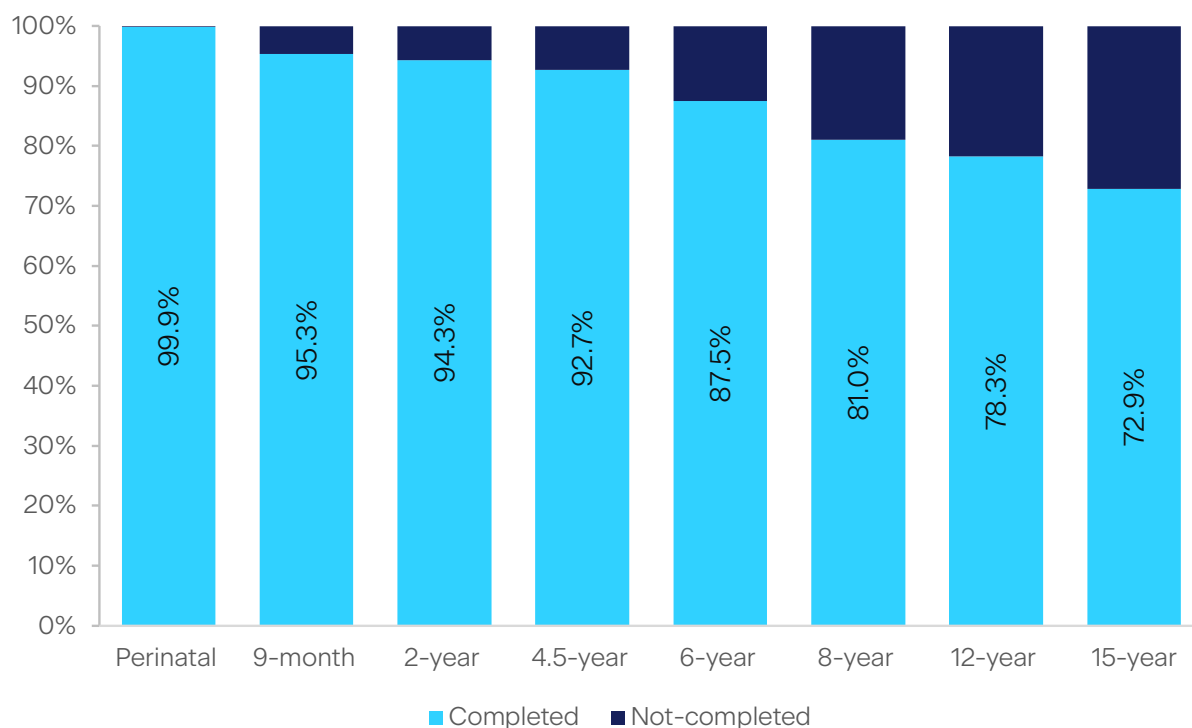


Figure 1. Longitudinal completion rate over time as a proportion of eligible cohort for each data collection wave

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 child health 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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