



# **Growing Up in New Zealand Research Questions**

## **Overarching longitudinal research questions**

The overall study objectives for the longitudinal study are detailed below. These were agreed during the development phase of the study and have been reviewed during the intensive planning phase for each Data Collection Wave. This process will continue.

The overarching goal of Growing Up in New Zealand has been to design and implement a contemporary longitudinal study of New Zealand children in the context of their families and the wider social, cultural and political environments to enable the following broad objectives to be met.

1. A mapping of the developmental trajectories for a cohort of New Zealand children as a group and within New Zealand European, Māori, Pacific and Asian subgroups, in order to identify the main causal pathways, and the links between them, across multiple levels of influence (political, social, cultural, intergenerational, familial and individual) for outcomes in key social, developmental and health domains across the life course. Specifically to:
  - determine the associations between outcomes at different points in the life course development of the child and in different environmental domains (referring to environment in its widest sense including the family, physical, social and political);
  - determine the nature and temporal sequence of determinants in the pathways, establishing those that are direct and those that are indirect (i.e. temporally proximal factors, in relation to the outcome, that act as mediators of more distal determinants in the developmental pathways);
  - determine the nature and the timing of factors that are of key importance and that may be amenable to intervention at the individual or at the policy level.
2. A description of cross-sectional outcomes (in several domains) at key points in the life course of the developing child to enable comparisons between subgroups and within New Zealand European, Māori, Pacific and Asian subgroups, and with international populations. Specifically to:
  - describe patterns of development at different stages of the life course across the New Zealand population;

- describe patterns of variation in developmental outcomes between different groups in the population (for example, by ethnicity, geographic location, socioeconomic status, parental and family characteristics);
  - compare these outcomes and variations in them with both international and earlier New Zealand cohorts.
3. A 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. Specifically to:
- examine influences on the range of normal development rather than focusing only on extremes of outcome.
4. Identification of critical or sensitive periods in development, and levels of influence, that will allow the development of policy directed at optimising the life course development of every child born in New Zealand. Specifically to:
- consider appropriate policy initiatives to address outcomes in key domains of individual development from childhood to adulthood including cognitive capacity, physical health, mental and emotional wellbeing, educational attainment, socialisation, behaviours (including risk-taking) and reproductive outcomes;
  - consider appropriate policy initiatives to address outcomes related to the wider influences on development including family structure and support, poverty and financial stress, social networks, cultural affiliation, physical environments and the media.

## **Detailed longitudinal research questions**

Specific research questions were developed to shape the design of the longitudinal study throughout its 21 years. They are divided into domain specific questions, but each question is not only relevant to one specific domain. Rather the collective set of questions addresses the overall study objectives. As each data collection wave is planned these questions are used to begin the process of deciding what constructs need to be measured at each time point.

### **Health and wellbeing**

1. What are the developmental pathways that determine the health status of children across the lifecourse from antenatal development to early adulthood?
2. How does an individual's biological profile, and the environment in which they grow, mutually interact over time to influence development?

### **Psychosocial and cognitive development**

3. What are the key determinants of the developmental trajectories that lead to psychosocial competence, and what precipitates either continuity or change in these trajectories?
4. What biological and environmental factors impact on cognitive ability and how do these factors influence developmental outcomes and trajectories over the lifecourse?

### **Education**

5. How do the multiple levels of educational context and composition, self, family and environment influence and affect educational and development outcomes over time?
6. What factors influence academic motivation, perceived academic competence and educational achievement through life, in particular at key transition points?

### **Family/whānau**

7. How does the quality of family dynamics including sibling, parent-child, inter-parental and relationships with extended family and whanau influence children's development?
8. How do children's experiences of family/whānau vary and what factors confer resilience or present risks to their development, in diverse family/whānau forms and in periods of transition?
9. How involved are fathers in children's lives, and what are their influences over time on children's development and wellbeing?

## **Culture and identity**

10. How are culture and ethnic identity understood and shaped for children and their families and what developmental trajectories are associated with different cultural upbringings across the lifecourse?
11. What influences do the physical, social and cultural environments have on children and their families' cultural experiences and identities in terms of holistic development?

## **Societal context and neighbourhood**

12. What are the key features (social networks, infrastructure, and physical environment) of neighbourhoods and environment which impact on an individual's development over time?
13. What role do neighbourhoods and environment have in mediating the associations between family circumstances, dynamics and social conditions, and child development?
14. How important is engagement of the family and child with key social services and institutions—including health, education and social service providers—in affecting child outcomes? What factors in the social and family environment facilitate effective engagement?
15. How are diverse social and economic contexts expressed in family values, practices, beliefs and resources? How are child outcomes shaped by the effect of these social locations on family values, practices, beliefs and resources?
16. How are child outcomes affected by the nature of their parents' workforce participation, and what factors both internal and external to the family modify these effects?
17. What effects do mass media, communications, and new technologies have on children's health and development, and what factors in the family and social environment modify these effects?

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