



# GROWING UP NEWS

Spring/Summer 2016



## From Susan

We have just finished the eight year old interviews with our Leading Light: Te Roopu Piata group. This is the first time we have seen our families since the children started school and it has been great to have them directly involved this time round.

Compared with earlier generations, our *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort lives in a world that is far more dependent on science and technology. This gives us the opportunity to use some of these new technologies to engage with the children to gather information about their development and environments.

We are now working through the lessons learned from these interviews and the logistics of how best to use our resources in collecting data from the main cohort children and families. We shall update you on our plans early in 2017.

It is important to us that we listen to every one of you and create opportunities for your voices to be heard. *Growing Up in New Zealand* is committed to collecting your stories, discovering what is working for you, what difficulties you encounter and making that information available to the country's decision makers. At the same time, please rest assured that the way in which we

collect and store your data makes it impossible for any person or organisation to identify you directly.

A big thank you to the more than 4,000 fathers and co-parents who completed the *Who are today's dads?* questionnaire. We launched the first report on the project at an event in September where the new Children's Commissioner, His Honour Judge Becroft, reflected on the pivotal importance of having dads and father-figures in the lives of young people. Most of our "dads" tell us that they have a lot of involvement in their children's lives, though many say that their jobs often make balancing work and family difficult.

Just as good nutrition forms a firm foundation for healthy development, so does regular exercise. We are fortunate that our climate allows us to get outside for sports and walks throughout the year. However Ministry of Health statistics tell us that many New Zealand adults and children do not meet recommended activity levels. We would love to hear from our children about some of the activities that they enjoy at school and with their families. Look out for more details on the last page of this newsletter.

Thank you again for being part of *Growing Up in New Zealand*. We look forward to learning more about you over the coming year.

Best wishes from the whole *Growing Up in New Zealand* team.

## Collaborations: teaming up so your stories can make a difference

### Auckland Council: The Southern Initiative (TSI) Early Years Challenge

This partnership between TSI and the Auckland Co-Design Lab, aims to improve outcomes for South Auckland children and their families during the critical development period from conception to age two. It brings together whānau, stakeholders and partners to explore how families, communities and services can work together better.

More than 1,000 *Growing Up in New Zealand* families currently live in TSI areas of Māngere, Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara, Papatoetoe, Manurewa and Papakura. *Growing Up in New Zealand* provides unique information on what works for children and families. The data will be used as an evidence base to develop practical solutions to improve child outcomes in South Auckland.

### National Science Challenge: A Better Start - E Tipu e Rea

*Growing Up in New Zealand* is partnering with A Better Start, one of eleven National Science Challenges designed to address some of the biggest science-based issues and opportunities facing our country. A Better Start's objective is to improve the potential for young New Zealanders to have healthy and successful lives. Researchers are taking a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to issues which are frequently studied in isolation: obesity, learning and mental health difficulties, targeting at-risk children early and engaging their communities. Data collected in the *Growing Up in New Zealand* study provide a rich and relevant resource for researchers from both projects to work together to find solutions to some of New Zealand's most challenging health questions.

# Latest Research

*Growing Up in New Zealand* data collections are a rich source of information about today's children and the environments that are shaping their development. Researchers at the University of Auckland and beyond are using these data to make some exciting discoveries.

Read more about these and other research stories at [www.growingup.co.nz](http://www.growingup.co.nz).

## Te reo Māori use increasing

Our preschool data show that when they were four years old, more than a quarter of all *Growing Up in New Zealand* children could greet or farewell people in te reo Māori. Around 40 percent sometimes or often spoke, recognised or responded to simple words in te reo Māori.

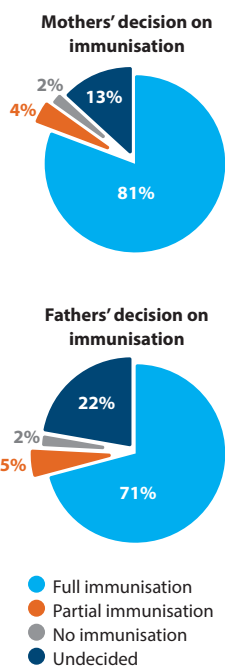
Around one in ten participants have te reo Māori as one of their spoken languages. More than half these children spoke simple sentences or phrases in te reo Māori and almost three quarters recognised and responded to spoken sentences or phrases.

## Fathers' views key to immunisation decisions



A *Growing Up in New Zealand* study suggests that aiming immunisation campaigns at fathers-to-be could be a good way to get more children immunised on time. When fathers decided during pregnancy to fully immunise their child, the child was three times more likely to be fully immunised than a child whose future dad had decided on partial or no immunisation, independent of the mother's intentions.

Children whose parents agreed on full immunisations were two to three times more likely to be immunised on time than the children of all other parents.



## Developing language skills

*Growing Up in New Zealand* researchers have developed the first ever language inventories to formally gauge the skills of New Zealand toddlers speaking Samoan or Tongan as their first language.

Over 500 Samoan and Tongan mothers in the study completed the vocabulary checklist for their two year-old children. The average total vocabulary from the 100 target words for two-year-old Samoan speakers was 13.5 words, and 23 words for Tongan speakers.



## Reducing impact of early ear infections

A new study, funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand, aims to improve developmental outcomes (such as hearing, language, cognitive, social or behavioural development) through prevention and timely treatment of childhood ear infections. Data already collected from *Growing Up in New Zealand* children will be analysed to see if the number of ear infections children have in their preschool years is associated with a greater risk of impaired hearing and other adverse outcomes at four and a half years of age.



## Who are Today's Dads?

The first report from the University of Auckland Centre for Longitudinal Research - He Ara Ki Mua project captures the diversity of biological fathers, step-fathers, co-mums, foster and adoptive parents and other family members who have a father role - when the children are six years old. The longitudinal framework of *Growing Up in New Zealand* will allow us to see how "dads" and the roles they play in the children's lives evolve as the children grow up.

The online questionnaire asked about parenting, family and how involved fathers and co-parents are with their *Growing Up in New Zealand* child. The investigators took a closer look at dads and work, reporting that over 90 percent were in paid work at that time. Most feel satisfied and/or secure in their jobs. However, three quarters of all working participants would like to change some aspect of their work situation.

Further reports will be available early in 2017. Together they will provide up-to-date, New Zealand-relevant evidence which can be used to evaluate and inform strategies and policies that support parents making positive contributions to children's early development.

Download the reports from our website [www.growingup.co.nz/todays-dads](http://www.growingup.co.nz/todays-dads) or contact us for more information.

# See how we've grown

Over a decade ago, we began planning an ambitious new longitudinal study that would chart the developmental pathways of a new generation born and raised in 21st century New Zealand. As we near the end of 2016 our researchers are making sense of the staggering 68,343,526 pieces of data we have collected about our 6822 participant children and their families.

Our vision was to recruit a cohort of children that accurately reflected the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of all New Zealand children born in 2009 - 2010. We wanted to see how their development was influenced by their immediate (family and whānau) and broader (community) environments throughout their journeys to adulthood.

Recognising that early life events have a profound effect on adult health and wellbeing, we recruited our representative sample of children *before* they were born. We have since shown that the *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort is broadly generalizable to all New Zealand births at that time. This is important to ensure our findings provide evidence to inform policy development appropriate to all contemporary New Zealand children.

The cohort size is consistent with comparable international studies but smaller than some (*Growing Up in Ireland* has 20,000 for a similar size population). It ensures we have the statistical power to deliver accurate information about children who identify primarily as Māori, Pacific and Asian and helps us understand why we see such different developmental pathways and inequalities in outcomes across different groups of children.

Our life-course and multidisciplinary approaches recognise the combined influence of pre-birth and subsequent environments during development. Through these, we capture the complex interplay of ethnic diversity across the multiple domains of biology, family and whānau, society, education, health and wellbeing, psychosocial and cognitive development, culture and identity. At each point we ask questions that will help us understand which factors optimise development and make children resilient— in other words, what works?

Longitudinal studies increase in usefulness over time. Significantly, *Growing Up in New Zealand* has captured the formative early time of life in great detail



establishing a valuable resource that will continue to build over the years to come.

- Information from the study has contributed to policy change in the areas of parental leave and household safety.
- Three reports characterise the cohort before birth, at nine months and at two years of age. Early in 2017 we shall report on the children at four and a half.
- Three reports draw on early-life data to explore residential mobility, family and environmental factors that contribute to child vulnerability, and how these change over time.
- Six focused policy briefs cover nutrition and physical activity during pregnancy, child safety, economic resources available to families, te reo Māori use in New Zealand homes, and immunisation.
- More than 20 technical reports and questionnaires
- Our investigators, colleagues and collaborators are swelling the academic literature with research articles based on *Growing Up in New Zealand* data. Some recent examples are highlighted on the opposite page of this newsletter.
- Our international reputation is reflected in the frequent invitations our researchers receive to speak at high profile events. In the last month Dr Morton was a guest speaker at the *Growing Up in Ireland* 10 year anniversary book launch and the International Conference on Parenting in the 21st Century in Hong Kong, among others.

**You can discover more about the *Growing Up in New Zealand* story and access our reports, publications and presentations on our website [www.growingup.co.nz](http://www.growingup.co.nz)**

Keep in touch

**Please let us know if your contact details change and keep up with what's happening with *Growing Up in New Zealand* throughout the year.**

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**A**s a *Growing Up in New Zealand* child you are very special to us. We know a lot about you and we want to learn more.

Did you know there are nearly seven thousand children in our *Growing Up in New Zealand* family and you are all 7 to 8 years old? We started talking to your parents before you were born. We asked them many more questions up to when you were 2 and again before you started school. We have collected nearly 70 million bits of information about you all – that averages out at around 10 thousand for each one!

This is called “research” and it helps us understand what it’s like to be growing up in New Zealand just now. It tells us what is the same for some of you, and what is different. Over the next year we shall be asking more questions so we can find out more about our *Growing Up in New Zealand* children now they are at school.

In the meantime we would love to know what you enjoy doing so check out our *Doing stuff* section on this page and get in touch.

# SPORTS WORDSEARCH

Words can go across and down. Find the solution and some more word games on our website: [www.growingup.co.nz/kids](http://www.growingup.co.nz/kids)

- BASKETBALL
- ROW
- BAT
- RUGBY
- BIKE
- RUN
- CRICKET
- SKATER
- JUMP
- SOCCER
- KARATE
- SWIM
- LEAP
- THROW
- OLYMPIC
- WALK

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| Q | U | A | O | L | Y | M | P | I | C |

**New Zealanders are very good at sports and even though our country is small our sportsmen and women are among the best in the world. Did you watch them on TV competing at the recent Olympic and Paralympic Games?**



Did you know that there were 306 different events at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in August with 11,303 athletes from 207 countries taking part? New Zealanders won 4 gold (first place), 9 silver (second place) and 5 bronze (third place) medals putting them in 19th place over all.

At the Paralympic Games for disabled athletes in September there were 534 events for 4,359 competitors from 163 countries.

New Zealand was even more successful there gaining 13th place with 9 gold, 5 silver and 7 bronze medals.

The Summer Olympics started 120 years ago and are held in a different country every four years. They were inspired by the ancient Olympic Games that took place in Olympia, Greece more than 2,000 years ago. The Paralympics started over 50 years ago as a way for people who had been injured in war to get active and strong. Now people with a wide range of disabilities from blindness to loss of limbs take part.



## DOING STUFF

**None of us likes being sick! Eating a variety of good foods and getting plenty of exercise help us to keep healthy.**

When you were four your mums told us that most of you like physical activity or exercise. We also asked them if you liked adventures and what you chose to do in your spare time. Here is what they said about you:

**Do you like high slides and going on adventures?**



VERY MUCH

A LITTLE BIT

NOT SO MUCH



**New Zealand has lots of outdoor spaces to enjoy and many of us enjoy getting outside, particularly in summer, to go walking, tramping, biking, swimming and boating or getting involved in organized sports. Don't forget to “slip, slop, slap”!**

We would love you to tell us what you enjoy doing, outdoors or inside, on your own, with your family or with your friends.

**You could:**

Write a story

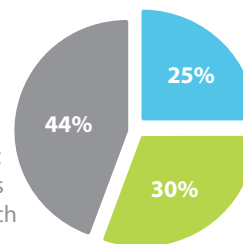
Draw a picture

Take a photo

Make a video

**What do you choose to do in your spare time?**

Like moving about and having quiet times just as much



Moving about, doing things like bike riding, dancing, or sports

Doing quiet things like TV, computer, drawing or reading

You can email these to us at [competition@growingup.co.nz](mailto:competition@growingup.co.nz) or post them to Growing Up in New Zealand, University of Auckland, PO Box 18288, Glen Innes, Auckland 1743. **Get them to us by 31 January 2017 and you will go in a draw for movie tickets for you and your family.**