

Key findings: Dads and mental health

Focuses on the mental health of more than 4,000 participants in the *Who are today's dads?* research project. This brochure is part of a wider series of key findings addressing the diversity, involvement, parenting roles and employment of "dads" to six-year old children in the contemporary, longitudinal study *Growing Up in New Zealand*. Participants include biological fathers, stepfathers, adoptive and foster parents, co-mums, grandparents and other family members.

We asked participants if they had ever had the following conditions diagnosed and/or treated by a doctor: anxiety (and/or panic attacks); depression; other mental health conditions. Participants also completed a standardised scale of psychological distress (Kessler-6) and two items on specific depression symptoms.

Diagnosed/treated mental health problems

1 in 7 participants has had a mental health problem diagnosed and/or treated at some time in their life



11%
have had depression



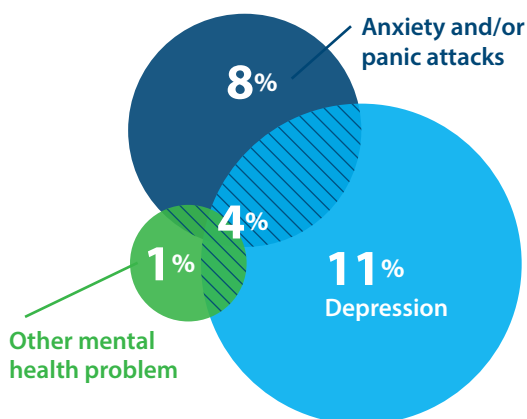
8%
have had anxiety
(and/or panic attacks)



1%
has had another mental
health problem

Multiple mental health problems

1 in 25 participants reports that they have had more than one type of mental health problem at some time (though not necessarily at the same time). The hatched area of this diagram shows the overlap between the mental health problems ever experienced by participants.



Mental and physical health

Eight out of ten participants who have had mental health problems say that they are in good health. As we found for all participants (see Key findings: Dads and health), a substantial number are at risk of future cardiovascular diseases (CVD): heart or blood vessel diseases or stroke.

79% of those who have had mental health problems say their physical health is good to excellent

53% of those who have had mental health problems have at least one CVD risk factor

1 in 8
has been treated for
high blood pressure



1 in 5
has been treated for
high cholesterol

Current mental wellbeing

In addition to self-reported lifetime mental health diagnoses/treatments, we asked participants about specific current mental health symptoms, lasting two weeks or more, over the past year.



1 in 4 reports feeling sad, blue or depressed



1 in 4 reports losing pleasure in things they usually care about or enjoy



1 in 3 has experienced either one of these depression symptoms



1 in 5 has experienced both of these depression symptoms

16%

of participants report current signs of psychological distress (according to the Kessler-6 scale)

Coping with life

39%

of participants experience some problems or stresses in their lives

43%

say they sometimes feel they need support or help but can't get it from anyone

54%

are coping with life very well

Mental health and parenting



Nearly half (47%) of participants say that the way they are feeling sometimes affects their ability to parent their *Growing Up in New Zealand* child.

Most participants (86%) often support their child's feelings and emotions. However just over 1% rarely or never do this.

Also in this series

- Overview: *Who are today's dads?* (2016)
- Key findings: Dads and work (2016)
- Key findings: Dads and mental health (2017)
- Research report: *Who are today's dads?* (2017)
- Technical report: Data collection for *Who are today's dads?* (2017)



Growing Up in New Zealand is New Zealand's contemporary longitudinal study of child development, tracking the development of nearly 7,000 children born in 2009 and 2010 in the context of their diverse families and environments from before their birth until they are young adults.

A key strength of the study is that the diversity of the child

cohort reflects the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of today's primary school age children. The study has collected detailed multidisciplinary information about children's early development on multiple occasions throughout their preschool years and will continue to do so every 2-3 years until they are adults.

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For further information visit www.growingup.co.nz