



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**AUCKLAND**  
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau  
NEW ZEALAND

**CENTRE FOR LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH**

**HE ARA KI MUA**



# Who are today's dads?

## Fathers and co-parents of children in the *Growing Up in New Zealand* study

Fathers and co-parents play important roles in children's lives. *Who are today's dads?* is a Centre for Longitudinal Research project related to the multidisciplinary, longitudinal study *Growing Up in New Zealand*.

### Who are today's dads?

- Explores the diversity of individuals who are father figures to contemporary New Zealand children with a focus on work, parenting, family and how involved fathers and co-parents are with their *Growing Up in New Zealand* child.
- Is interested in all "dads" and includes biological fathers, step-fathers, co-mums, foster and adoptive parents as well as other family members who have a father role.
- Is based on responses from 4121 participants who answered a questionnaire for the project when their *Growing Up in New Zealand* child was around six years of age.
- Wants to know how dads are involved in their children's early development, health and wellbeing.
- Provides 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.

*This project is funded by the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*

# A snapshot of today's dads

Participant fathers and co-parents represent a rich mix of ages, ethnicities, birth places, occupations and relationships with their *Growing Up in New Zealand* children. This report captures the diversity of our participants when their children are around six years old. The longitudinal nature of the *Growing Up in New Zealand* study provides a framework in which to follow how the roles these participants play in their children's lives might change as the children grow up.

## Participants

Reflect the diversity of 21st century family relationships and household arrangements.



**97%**

are the biological father of their *Growing Up in New Zealand* child



**93%**

live with their *Growing Up in New Zealand* child all (or almost all) the time

## Age

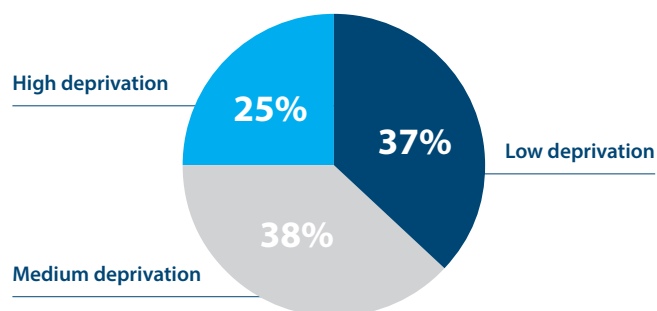
**40 years**

The median age of participants

**22-79 years**

The age range of participants, including grandfathers, who act like a father-figure in the child's life

## Area level deprivation (NZDEP2013)



## Employment

Our Key findings report on *Dads and work* investigates how participants are balancing work and family commitments.

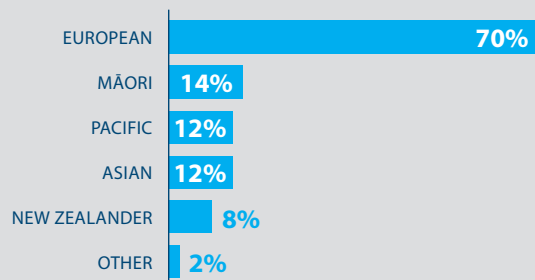


**94%**

are in paid employment

## Ethnicity

Participants were asked to include all ethnicities they identified with. In all there were 77 combinations of ethnicity.



**20%**

of participants identified with more than one ethnicity



**2.4%**

of participants identified with three ethnicities

## Language

Participants speak **81 different languages** with their *Growing Up in New Zealand* children



**5.7%** regularly speak **te reo Māori** with their *Growing Up in New Zealand* children



## Country of birth



**68%**

were born in New Zealand



Migrant participants were born in **93** different countries



**71%**

of migrant participants came to New Zealand as adults

# Roles of today's dads

The majority of participants say they are more involved in their *Growing Up in New Zealand* child's life than their own father figures were in theirs. Most report a high degree of involvement in their six year old child's care and activities during the time they spend with the child.

## Care and support



84%

help their child with personal care



82%

eat an evening meal with their child



86%

support their child's feelings and emotions



82%

are involved in their child's physical activities and physical development, such as playing sports, biking and running around



66%

are involved in their child's social activities such as playing with friends, siblings and others

## How dads feel about parenting



73%

say they are more involved with their children than their own father-figure was with them



82%

feel they are a very good or better than average parent



95%

express affection by hugging, kissing or holding their child



88%

have warm close times together with their child



89%

feel confident about managing their child's behaviour

## Learning and school



65%

read books to/with their child



53%

are involved in homework and/or school work with their child



84%

talk to their child about what happens at school and/or what they did at school



81%

have at least one form of involvement with their child's school

**What is the most important part of your role in your *Growing Up in New Zealand* study child's life?**

**A**lways making time, being there and fair. Providing love, encouragement, understanding and support in addition to the home, food, clothes and toys."

## More involvement wanted



58%

would like to be more involved in their child's life



89%

of those who would like to be more involved said that work commitments prevented this from happening

**B**eing a dad is the most important role in my life by giving, supporting, caring, having fun and loving during the good time and bad times."

# What next?

## Available now



Key findings on **Dads and work**



[www.growingup.co.nz/todays-dads](http://www.growingup.co.nz/todays-dads)



## Available from 2017



Final report: Who are today's dads?



Key findings on

- Dads who don't live with their children
- Health and wellbeing of dads



Technical report on data collection for  
Who are today's dads?



External data access available to  
researchers. Visit [www.growingup.co.nz](http://www.growingup.co.nz)



*Growing Up in New Zealand* is New Zealand's contemporary longitudinal study of child development, tracking the development of nearly 7000 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.

The unique information collected within *Growing Up in New Zealand* is designed to contribute evidence to inform

- a better understanding of the causal pathways that lead to particular developmental outcomes in contemporary New Zealand, and
- the effective evaluation, development and implementation of programmes and policy to optimise: support for families; health and development of children; and equity of outcomes across and within the New Zealand population.

*Growing Up in New Zealand* is University of Auckland-led research funded by the Crown. The Crown funding of the core study and data collection is managed by the Social Policy and Evaluation Research Unit (Superu).

For further information visit [www.growingup.co.nz](http://www.growingup.co.nz)