

# “What is the best thing about being you?”



What we heard from *Growing Up in New Zealand* children.

“I am loved”

“I am happy all the time and I feel safe”

“I am looked after really well”

“I love my home and my cats”

“I get a Christmas present and I’m not homeless”

“I have a warm house to sleep in and get lots of food”

“I have everything I need to be a good person”

“My mother spends a lot of money on me!”

“I am healthy”

“I’m healthy and I’m alive!”

“I get lots of fun times”

“I’m fit and healthy and fast”

“I am learning”

“I’m learning new stuff about myself”

“I love how I learn differently”

“I can build big things with Lego”

“I am me”

“There is always someone there for me when I feel down”

“I have lots of friends”

“I’m unique”



# Now We Are Eight

A summary of our findings

The *Now We Are Eight* report presents a snapshot of eight-year olds’ lives, experiences and development in the complex world of 21st Century New Zealand.

It draws on the voices of the 6,000 children in the *Growing Up in New Zealand* study, and their families and whānau, who generously share their stories so that we can learn more about what enables children to thrive and prosper in our rapidly changing world.



*Now We Are Eight* provides a unique insight into children’s health and wellbeing in middle childhood. It explores the children’s emerging sense of culture and identity, and how they connect with their families and the wider environment.

This is the first *Growing Up in New Zealand* report to truly represent the “voices” of the children, as the children involved were interviewed directly to better understand their views, values and challenges.

We are honoured and privileged to amplify the voices of these children who have so much to teach us about creating a better world for our children and families.

*Now We Are Eight* paints a portrait of a diverse generation of children at a key time in middle childhood. They are mostly growing up healthy and happy in families that support their wellbeing. Many are already developing a strong sense of their own identity, especially in the areas of ethnicity, gender and body image. They are digital natives who are more likely to interact with friends and family online than any generation previously, which presents both challenges and opportunities for them and for their families. There remains a significant proportion of children who are growing up in families burdened with the multiple stresses associated with economic, material and social hardship which unfortunately plays out in poorer outcomes for these children overall.

This summary of the *Now We Are Eight* report presents a selection of the findings. If you’d like to read the full report, please visit

[www.growingup.co.nz/now-we-are-eight](http://www.growingup.co.nz/now-we-are-eight)



## Identity

For the first time, the *Growing Up in New Zealand* children identified their own ethnicity and gender.

**1/3** of children

identified themselves with more than one ethnicity:

- 57% European
- 22% as Māori
- 15% as Pacific
- 12% as Asian
- 6% as other



**5** most common languages spoken:

English, Māori, Mandarin, Hindi, Samoan

**29%** of Māori children could hold a conversation in Māori

KEI TE PĒHEA A KOE?

KEI TE PAI AHAU!

**1.6%**

identified with a gender that did not align with their sex at birth

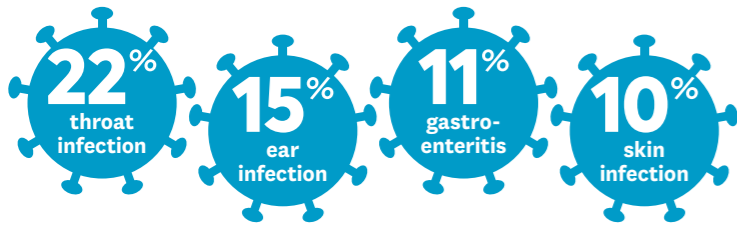
**14%**

identified their gender as somewhere between a boy and a girl

## Health and wellbeing

Most children are healthy, although infections and allergies are still common. Mental wellbeing is an emerging issue.

Infections in the past 12-months included:



**1/3** of children were classified as overweight or obese

Of children classified as obese **2/3** wanted to be smaller



**84%** of mothers rate their children's health as good or excellent

Only 64% of children rate their health this way.

Symptoms of anxiety were more likely for Māori, Pacific or Asian children



Most children demonstrate pro-social behaviours, such as being kind to younger children

## Family and whānau

Most children are happy and growing up in supportive and loving families who play, care and provide for them.

**95%** of mothers regularly expressed physical affection with their child



**2 in 3** children didn't eat enough vegetables

based on the recommended three serves a day.



**1 in 3** children drank two or more fizzy drinks in the past week



**49%** of children worry about their family's finances



## Home

The *Growing Up in New Zealand* children are highly mobile and some move home a lot. Many live in poor quality housing and some miss out on basic household necessities.

**3/4** of children have moved at least once in their lives



**29%** of families often or sometimes could not afford to eat properly



**37%** of children lived in a damp or mouldy home



## School

Most children enjoy school, however bullying is a relatively common experience.

**89%**

of children enjoy school



**29%** of children use educational or support services



such as a Reading Recovery Teacher or Teacher Aide.

**35%** of children say they were bullied in the previous year

14% say they were bullied at least once a week.



## Neighbourhood

The *Growing Up in New Zealand* children enjoy a range of activities, including screen time.

**95%** had access to at least one device at home

A computer, laptop, tablet or smart phone.



Children average nearly three hours a day of passive screen time

**12%** of children often feel worried about their safety online

**1 in 2** children take art, music or dance lessons



**2 in 3** children play in an organised team sport



**47%** of children are allowed to cross the road alone

**42%** sometimes use active forms of transport to get to school

Walking, scootering, or biking.

