

Key findings: Dads and health

Takes a closer look at the health of the more than 4,000 participants in the *Who are today's dads?* research project, focusing on their health and risks of future cardiovascular disease – the leading cause of death in New Zealand. Participant “dads” include biological fathers, stepfathers, adoptive and foster parents, co-mums, grandparents and other family members who are father-figures to six-year old children in the contemporary, longitudinal study *Growing Up in New Zealand*. Dads’ involvement with their child can be affected by their own physical health in terms of their accessibility, engagement and responsibility. Dads’ health and health behaviours also impact on their child’s current and future development and wellbeing.



 **88%** say their health is good to excellent

Nine out of ten participants perceive their health as good to excellent. However, a substantial number are at risk of future cardiovascular disease.

Cardiovascular disease risk

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) include heart or blood vessel diseases and stroke. Many factors work together to influence the risk of CVD, the most important are smoking;



obesity; and having diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Nearly half the participants report having at least one of these risk factors.



Managing blood pressure and cholesterol

1 in 10
says they have been treated for
high blood pressure



1 in 8
says they have been treated for
high cholesterol

Keeping Dads healthy

Some risk factors for future CVD can be controlled, treated or modified, while others cannot. This section reports on some of the lifestyle factors that can be changed.

Smoking



1 in 8 participants smokes cigarettes daily

They smoke an average of **10 cigarettes per day** (range: 1 to 50 per day)

Alcohol use

The Ministry of Health recommends that to lower long-term health risks, men should drink no more than three standard drinks a day and no more than 15 standard drinks a week; they should have at least two alcohol-free days every week.



87% of participants say they regularly drink alcohol

Of those,



17% drink 4 or more times a week



27% drink 2 to 3 times a week

On a typical day on which participants drink alcohol,



1 in 7 drinks 5 or more standard drinks



1 in 4 drinks 3 or 4 standard drinks

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Calculations based on participants' reported height and weight indicate that:



27%

are normal weight



44%

are overweight



28%

are obese

Physical activity

The Ministry of Health recommends that adults do at least 30 minutes of moderate or 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity on five days a week.



50% of participants say they do at least **30 minutes** of moderate to vigorous physical activity **3 to 5 times per week**

Healthy eating



1 in 4 participants says they usually eat at least **2 serves of fruit and 3 serves of vegetables** per day (as recommended by the Ministry of Health)



1 in 20 participants says they usually eat only **1 serve of fruit and vegetables** per day



1 in 20 participants says they usually eat **no fruit or vegetables**

Also in this series

- Overview: *Who are today's dads?* (2016)
- Key findings: Dads and work (2016)
- Key findings: Dads and mental health (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.

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