

A snapshot of Life in Lockdown: Children's Health, Wellbeing, and Education

The survey:

This country's largest longitudinal study, *Growing Up in New Zealand*, conducted a survey with nearly 2,500 children during the restrictions imposed to manage the Covid-19 outbreak in Aotearoa New Zealand in May 2020. The survey was one of the largest conducted worldwide with children to explore the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on children's health, wellbeing and education.

Who participated:

The online survey was sent to children aged 10 and 11 in the *Growing Up in New Zealand* study. Nearly 2,500 children completed the survey.

Key findings:

Growing Up in New Zealand's two Life in Lockdown reports provide a snapshot of life for New Zealand children during Covid-19 restrictions. This information can help guide the development of appropriate strategies and support for children and their whānau, both during and post-pandemic.



Photo credit: Shona Dey -
Lockdown series 2020.

Bubble life:

- Most children (88%) felt supported by their family in lockdown and nearly 80% said they had a good time with their family.
- Nearly half (45%) felt they did not have someone they could talk to regularly about their feelings in lockdown.
- Around one in ten children had more than one household bubble.
- Just over 40% of children had one or more essential workers in their bubble(s) and this figure was higher for Pasifika children.
- The majority of children (86%) said they were 'moderately' or 'more connected' to friends and family outside their bubble.
- There was a 21% increase in doing outdoor sporting activities with family and a 23% increase in baking in the 2020 lockdown compared with eight-years of age.



School:

- More than two-thirds of children used devices every day for school/homework.
- Three-quarters of the children reported lower school satisfaction in lockdown compared with at eight-years of age. School satisfaction scores were higher for children in larger bubbles.
- Most children (84%) had people in their bubble involved in their schoolwork several times a week or more.
- Children who reported 'always' being involved in online and/or socially-distanced community activities had higher school satisfaction



Physical Health:

- Most children (83%) reported 'very good' or 'excellent' health.
- Children with obesity when they were eight years of age had poorer health at the time of the survey, compared to children of normal body size.
- Children who were less connected to friends and family during Alert Level 4 were more likely to report poorer overall health status, compared to children who were more connected.
- Children who were 'always' or 'often' worried about how much money their family had were more likely to report poorer physical health.
- Children who were still undertaking schoolwork at home at the time of the survey (during Alert Levels 2 and 3) were more likely to report poorer health.



Mental wellbeing:

- Pasifika children had significantly lower anxiety scores, compared to European children.
- Girls were more likely to show symptoms of depression and anxiety than boys.
- Children with two or more wellbeing or developmental concerns at eight years of age, such as disabilities or learning challenges, were more likely to show symptoms of depression and anxiety during lockdown.
- Children who had more regular positive experiences during Alert level 4 were less likely to show symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Children who were always or often worried about how much money their family had, had higher mean depression and anxiety scores.
- Children who woke frequently during the night (when they were eight) had higher anxiety scores in lockdown than children who didn't wake during the night.
- Children who had six or more people in their bubble during Alert Level 4 were less likely to report negative changes in health and wellbeing.



Photo credit: Shona Dey - Lockdown series 2020.

Recommendations:

- Ensure equitable access to devices, such as laptops, in future online and distance learning.
- Tailor post-pandemic approaches in schools to cater for children's different lockdown experiences.
- Provide children with more flexibility, independence, and free-time in their learning where appropriate given it is associated with increased school satisfaction.
- Promote and provide greater access to resources for caregivers and children to identify and manage symptoms of depression and anxiety in young people.
- Support families to be financially secure and decrease child poverty, as well as improve educational opportunities for young women and mothers.
- Deliver a campaign to educate parents and caregivers that children may worry about money, and include strategies to reassure children.
- Investigate additional resources and support for families with children who have disabilities or learning challenges, to support mental wellbeing and education during future Covid-19 restrictions.



From the children:

Best things about Lockdown:

“Being with my whānau. I love my bubble!”

“Spending time with my grandparents after we combined bubbles.”

“I get to wake up later because I don't have to leave early for school.”

“Reading, eating healthy stuff, bonding with my family.”

“Going out for walks everyday with my mum, baking more with my family, and doing activities too.”

Worst things about lockdown:

“I sometimes get worried that we will run out of money and have to sell our home.”

“Not being able to see my friend, not being able to go to school, not being able to touch anything.”

“I worry that when my family members are out shopping, they could just come back with the virus.”

“Feeling like I'm eating too much, parents not having money, arguing with parents”

“I didn't enjoy it because we were separated from people. School was very hard and mum and dad were always worried about it.”