



**An
Phríomh-Oifig
Staidrimh**

Central
Statistics
Office

***Growing Up in Ireland – Together – Cohort '08 Twins in
the Growing Up in Ireland Study***

Presented at Growing Up in Ireland 17th Annual
Conference 4th November 2025 by Bernadette Ryan CSO

Only their mother could tell them apart



An investigation of the high twinning rate in the Republic of Ireland (Dean & Keane, 1972)

- **Study Overview:**
 - Investigated unusually high twinning rates in Ireland using 1969–1970 CSO birth data
 - Published in *British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine*
- **Key Findings:**
 - Ireland had the highest twinning rate among countries with national statistics
 - Twinning rate peaks at age 35–39 (19.6/1000 births); lowest under age 20 (5.8/1000)
 - Higher rates in Connacht and among mothers with ≥5 children
 - Weinberg's method estimated 26% of twins were monozygotic
- **Conclusion:**
 - Ireland's elevated twinning rate due to:
 - Higher twinning at all age groups vs. England & Wales
 - More births to older mothers

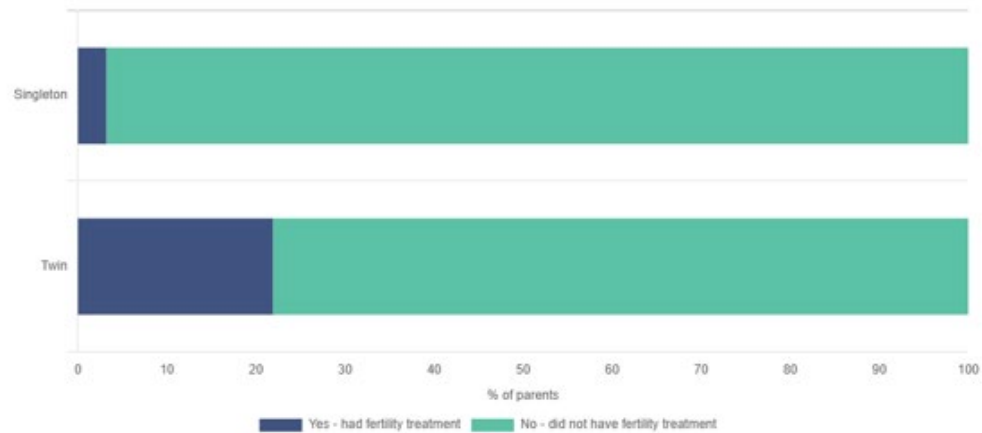


Two perspectives, one shared journey

- Over 650 families with twins/triplets interviewed when children were 9 months old. This represents 5.9% of total population of children interviewed in GUI wave 1.
- Data collected on each child at 9 months.
- In some cases, both twins were interviewed; in others, only one.
- This release includes previously unused data from non-sampled twins.
- Figures are **unweighted** and **not nationally representative**.
- Comparisons between twins and singletons are **illustrative**, not empirical.



"Every journey starts with a decision."



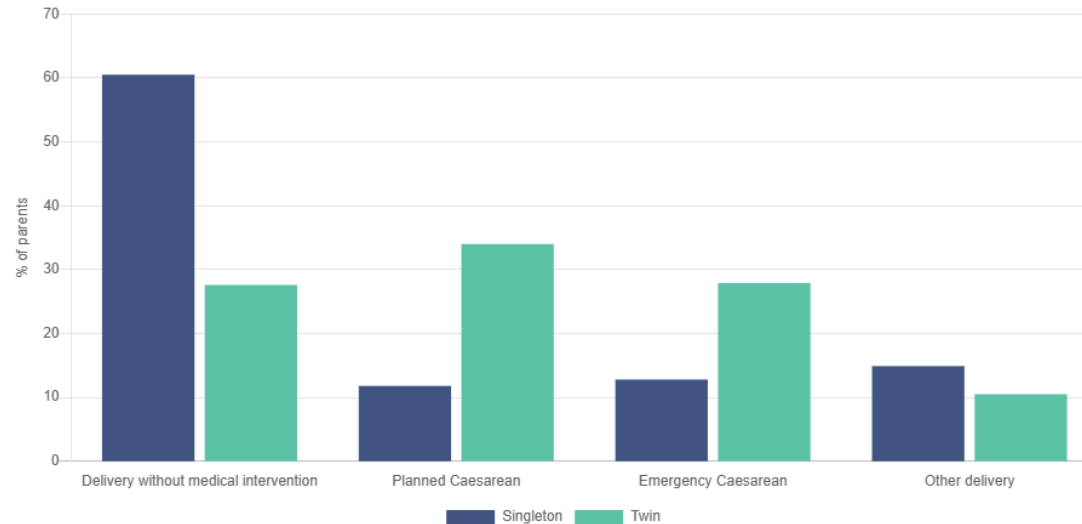
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- **Fertility Treatment:**
 - Twins: 21.9%
 - Singletons: 3.2%
- **Planned Pregnancy:**
 - Twins: 65.7%
 - Singletons: 58%



"When the moment comes, it rarely goes as expected."

Figure 1.5 Type of delivery of twins and singleton births



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- **Delivery Method:**

- No intervention: Twins 27.6% vs Singletons 60.5%
- Planned C-section: Twins 34% vs Singletons 11.8%
- Emergency C-section: Twins 27.9% vs Singletons 12.8%

- **Gestation Period:**

- Twins: Median 37 weeks
- Singletons: Median 40 weeks

- **Breastfeeding:**

- Ever breastfed: Twins 53.9%, Singletons 60.6%
- Still breastfeeding at 9 months: 10.1% of twins



"Two hearts, one rhythm — or not."

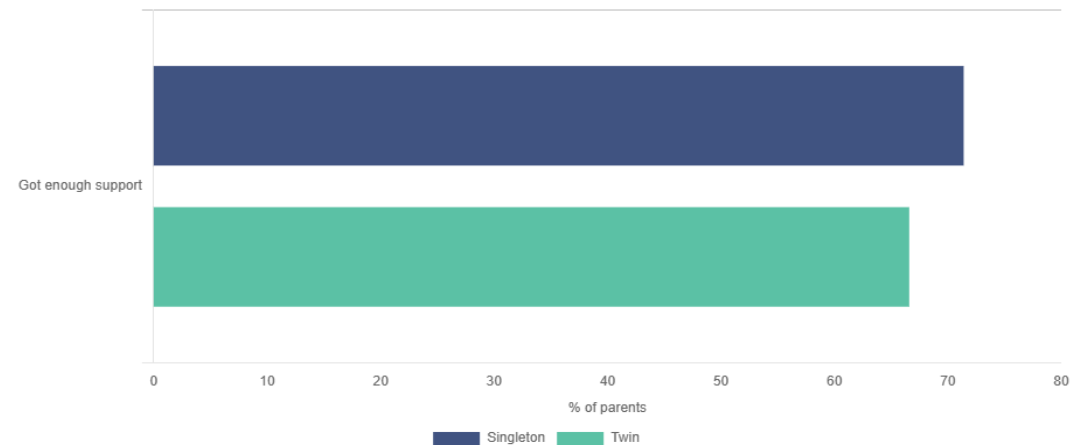
- **Twin Type:** 80.6% fraternal, 19.4% identical
- **Matching Outfits:** 59.2% dressed alike at least some of the time
- **Bonding:** 82.8% of babies liked being with their twin most of the time
- **Awareness:** 38.4% didn't notice their twin most of the time
- **Separation:** 64% were rarely or never upset when parted



"It takes a village — but sometimes, the village is smaller."

- **Support from Family/Friends:**
 - Twins: 66.6% felt supported
 - Singletons: 71.4%
- **Self-Minding at 9 Months:**
 - Twins: 69%
 - Singletons: 59.9%
- **Childcare Affected by Finances:**
 - Twins: 42.6%
 - Singletons: 33.5%
- **Sleeping Arrangements:**
 - Twins more likely to sleep with other children (8% vs 0.9%)
 - Twins less likely to sleep in parents' bed (5.1% vs 11.5%)

Figure 1.6 Mothers perception of the amount of support they receive from friends and family outside the home



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Every child grows in their own way

- **Child Behaviour & Development: Twins vs Singletons**
- **Parental Concerns:**
 - Twins: 10.9% of mothers had concerns
 - Singletons: 6.8%
- **Developmental Milestones (ASQ 2):**
 - **Gross Motor:** Twins 39% failed vs Singletons 14.6%
 - **Fine Motor:** Twins 14.4% vs Singletons 9.7%
 - **Personal-Social:** Twins 32.2% vs Singletons 17.6%
 - **Communication:** Twins 15.7% vs Singletons 6.6%



Two Voices, One Story

- Wave 6 of Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) Cohort '08
- Interviews conducted with 407 13-year-old twins
- Twins represented 6% of the total 13-year-old sample

Data Collection & Reference Period

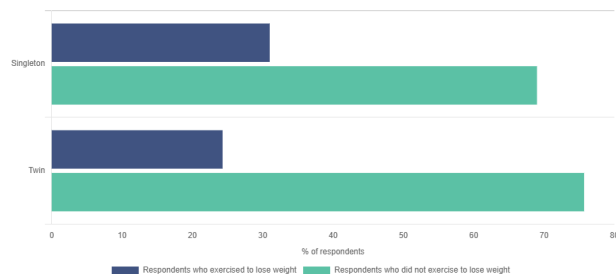
- **Timing:** Data for Cohort '08 Wave 6 was collected between **summer 2021 and summer 2022**.
- **Conducted by:** The **Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)** led the data collection process.
- **COVID-19 Impact:** Due to the pandemic's onset in **March 2020**, this wave was **entirely remote**, marking a significant shift from previous face-to-face fieldwork phases.



Same Age, Same Stage — But Not the Same Story

- Long-term conditions affect twins' daily lives slightly more (66.4% vs 62.2%).
- Twins visit GPs less often (70.3% had no visits vs 64% of singletons).
- Physical activity levels are nearly identical across both groups.
- Twins are less likely to exercise or diet for weight control.

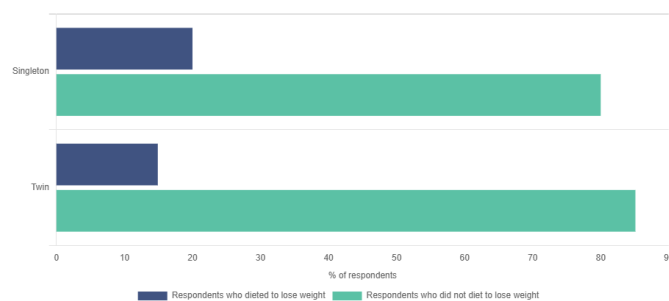
Figure 1.3 Percentage of respondents who exercised to lose weight or avoid gaining weight



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Survey item: "Have you ever exercised to lose weight or to avoid gaining weight?"

Figure 1.4 Respondents who had ever eaten less food, fewer calories, or foods low in fat to lose weight or to avoid gaining weight



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Survey item: "Have you ever eaten less food, fewer calories, or foods low in fat to lose weight or to avoid gaining weight?"

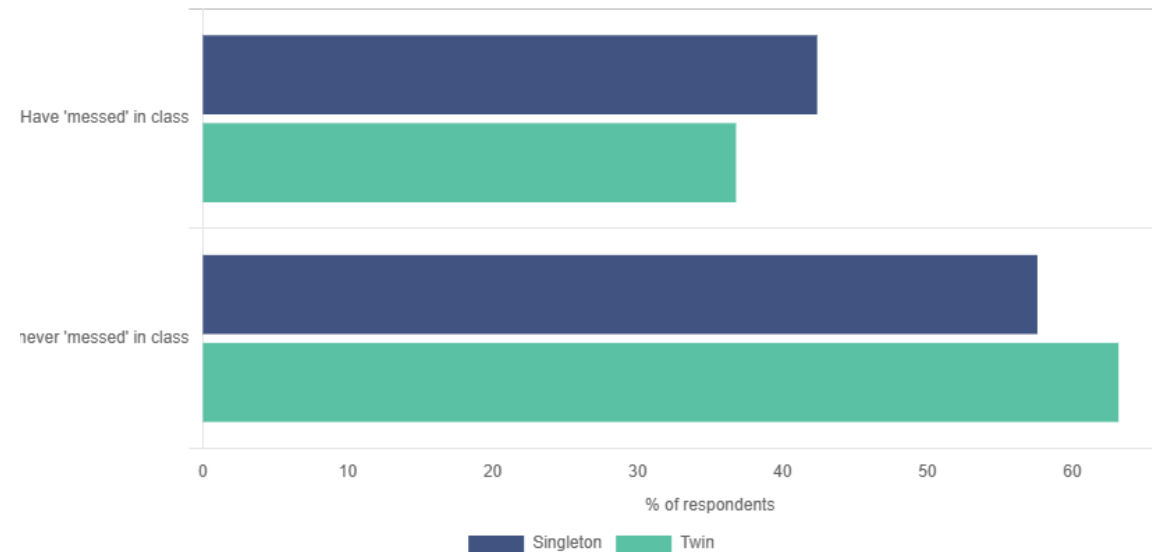


New School, Same Bond: How Twins and Singletons Navigate Change

Whether arriving solo or side-by-side, the journey into secondary school is filled with shared emotions.

- Nearly half of both twins (42.7%) and singletons (46.5%) felt they were settling in well.
- Nostalgia runs deep: 49.7% of twins and 46.3% of singletons missed their primary school friends.
- Singletons slightly more likely to strongly agree they've made new friends (42.3% vs 35.9%).
- Punctuality is high across the board — 73.9% of twins and 69.6% of singletons were never late.
- Twins reported fewer classroom disruptions (63.2% vs 57.5%).

Figure 1.7 Percentage of respondents who have or have not 'messed' in class in the last 12 months



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as other than 'never' - i.e. 'now and again; quite often and all of the time' were merged for the purposes of this table



Harmony at Home: What Twins Teach Us About Connection

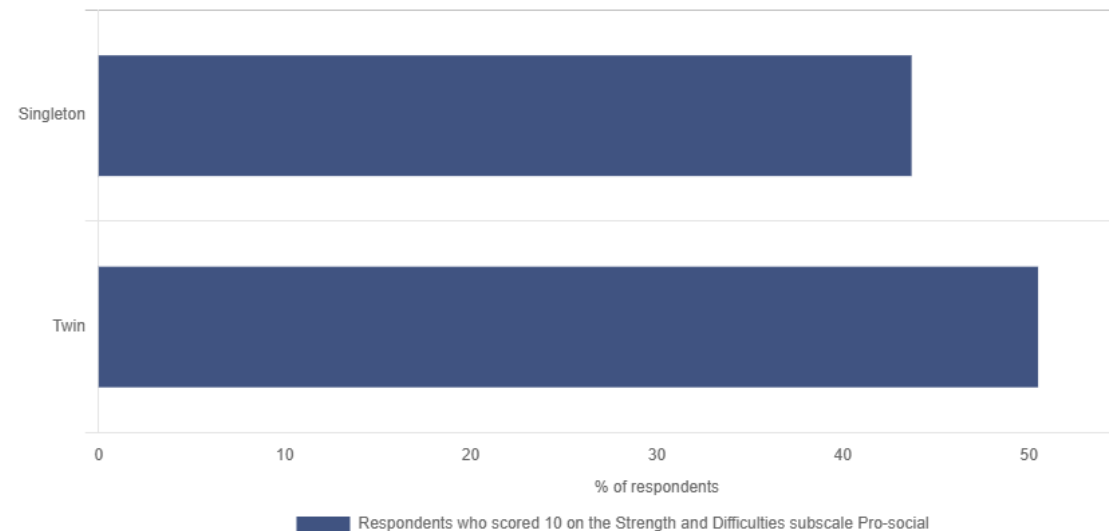
- 37.6% of primary caregivers of twins reported the lowest possible conflict score (8) — compared to 26.4% of singleton caregivers.
- Among secondary caregivers, 32.8% of twin parents scored 8, versus 25.8% of singleton parents.
- The Pianta Conflict Scale measures perceived negativity in the parent-child relationship — lower scores mean less conflict.



More Than Behaviour: What Twins Reveal About Growing Up Well – Strengths and Difficulties scales

- Emotional well-being: 38.1% of twins scored 0 (vs 28.5% of singletons).
- Conduct: 55.7% of twins scored 0 (vs 51.8% of singletons).
- Hyperactivity/Inattention: 26.8% of twins scored 0 (vs 23% of singletons).
- Peer relationships: 51.4% of twins scored 0 (vs 43% of singletons).
- Prosocial behaviour: 50.5% of twins scored the maximum of 10 (vs 43.7% of singletons).

Figure 1.11 Percentage of respondents who scored 10 on the Strengths and Difficulties Subscale Pro-social



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Only scores of '10' on the Pro-social subscale are included in this table; all other scores were excluded.



Go raibh maith agaibh

Thank you to all the individuals—twins, singletons—and their families who shared their time, insights, and experiences during their interviews. To everyone who participated: your trust and your stories were invaluable, and we are deeply grateful for your contribution to this research.

