



Twin Newsletter

June 2005 Volume 1 No. 1

Dear MIDUS Twin:

Thank you so much for your participation in our Study of Midlife Health and Well-Being. We deeply appreciate the time and effort you have devoted to the study, both when it was launched about ten years ago and more recently, with our new round of data collection.

I am happy to report that the study is thriving. Scientists from all over the United States have used the information we obtained from you to explore the many factors that influence people's health and well-being as they move across the decades of adult life. Over 100 published studies have appeared in fields of aging, demography, economics, epidemiology, family studies, health, medicine, psychology, psychiatry, and sociology. If you would like to learn more about these many studies, information is available at this website: www.aging.wisc.edu

The other very exciting news is that we have now recontacted over 70% of individuals who were in the original study. These individuals have completed new telephone interviews and questionnaires. Many are also participating in daily diary assessments and medical assessments. We are truly thrilled to have such wonderful involvement from so many of you, and we look forward to sending you updates about our new findings.

In the meantime, we thought you would appreciate some news about the many twins who have been part of the study. The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a sketch of what we know about the MIDUS twins – including how many of each type of twins we have, what their early life experiences were like, how similar and different they are as adults, how close they are to each other, and their health and well-being. We hope you find this information interesting. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions.

Sincerely,

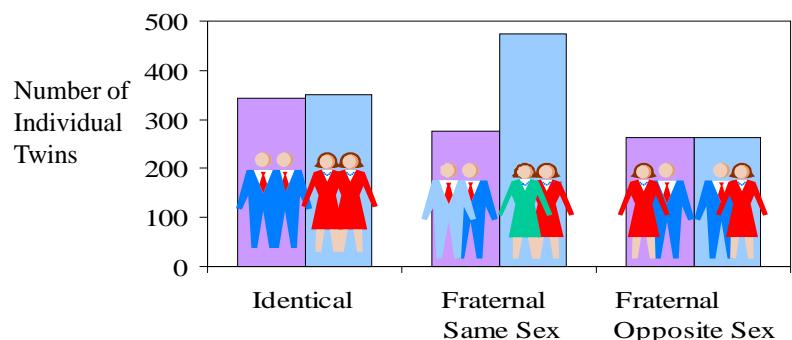
Carol D. Ryff, Director
MIDUS National Study of Health and Well-Being

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Who are the MIDUS Twins?

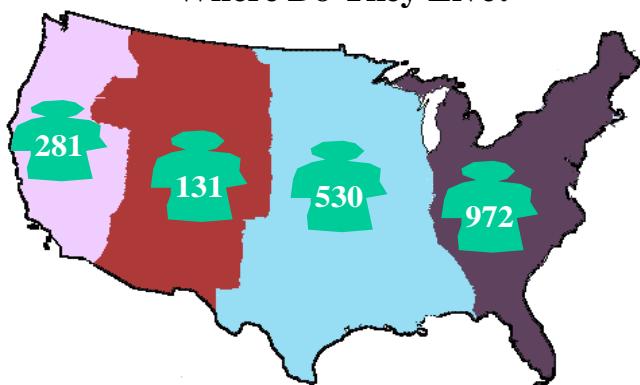
Number of Twins By Type



Overall, 1,988 twins participated in the original MIDUS study. We have fairly equal numbers of twin types, both identical and fraternal. However there were more female fraternal twins than other twin types.



Where Do They Live?



This figure shows the number of twins in each of the four United States time zones. We are interested in where twins live, as MIDUS findings show that people in various regions of the country differ in their health and well-being.

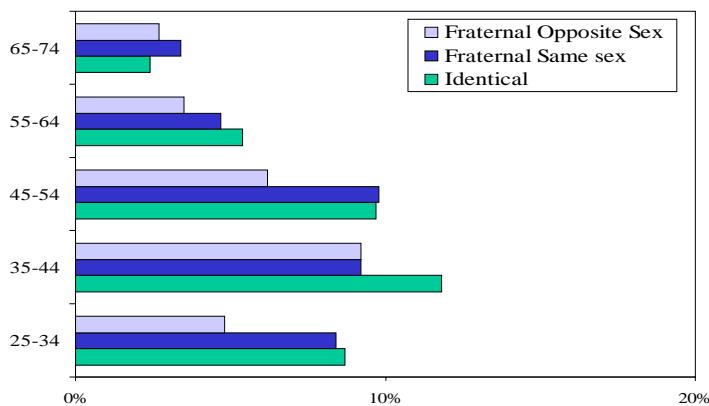
Did You Know?

Fact about Twins:

- Fraternal twins are more common than identical twins. The chances of having identical twins is about one in 285.

Ages and Educational Levels

Ages of Twin Participants



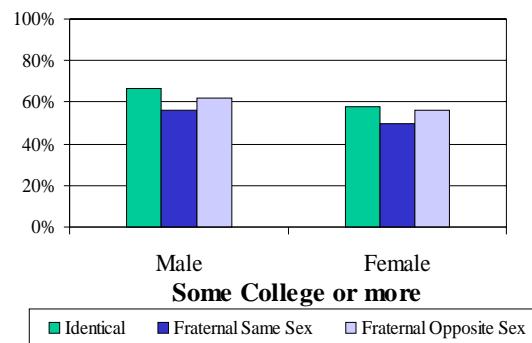
Since we have twins from early adulthood to later life, we can look at age differences in their health and well-being. For example, when we compare self-reported health of younger twins with that of older twins, we find that all younger twins rate their health better than older twins. However, across all age groups, identical twins tend to have more positive ratings of their health than fraternal twins (both same-sex and opposite-sex).

Overall, educational levels were similar across the twins, although identical twins were most likely to have attended at least some college, while fraternal same-sex twins were least likely to have reached this level of education. There was also a strong difference between men and women in educational levels. Male twins were more likely than female twins to have attended some college or more.



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Education



Pop Quiz on Twins

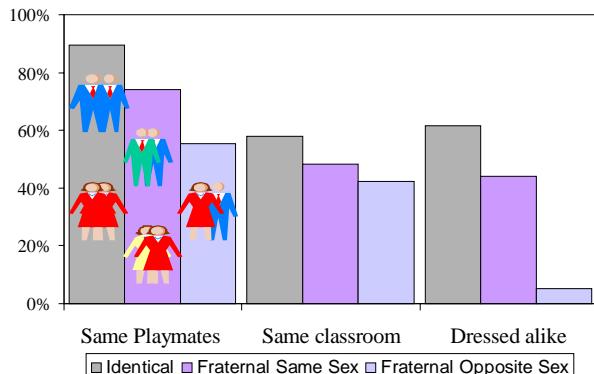
1. *True or False:* The Wright brothers were twins.
2. *True or False:* The musician Liberace was a twin.
3. *True or False:* Elvis Presley was a twin.
4. *Who was the first twin to reach 400 home runs in his Major League career?*
5. *If your mother is an identical twin, what is your relationship to her twin's child?*
6. *How tall are the world's tallest female twins: 6'6", 6'4 3/4" or 6'5"?*
7. *What country has the highest incidence of fraternal twins?*
8. *When did the first successful separation of conjoined twins take place: 1943, 1948, 1952 or 1957?*



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How Similar were Childhood Experiences?

Childhood Experiences



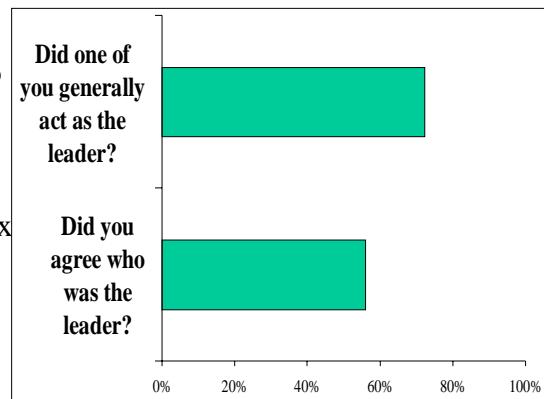
Perhaps not surprisingly, identical twins tended to have very similar childhood experiences. They were more likely to have the same playmates, to be in the same classrooms and to dress alike than fraternal twins. Fraternal opposite-sex twins were least likely to have the same childhood experiences.

The graph at the right illustrates a dynamic feature of twins' relationships. While a large majority (72%) of twins agreed that one of them generally acted as the leader, there was much disagreement among them as to who the leader was.

Identical twins were the least likely to answer that they themselves were the leader, while fraternal opposite-sex twins were most likely to admit to being the leader. Identical twins were also the most likely to say the relationship was about equal.



Childhood Leadership



Relationship with Parents

All twins were asked questions about their childhood relationships with both parents. These questions concerned how much each parent attended to, loved, taught, understood and protected them during the years they were growing up. On average, there were no differences between twins in the ratings they gave their parents, nor were there differences among types of twins. The only difference found was between ratings of the parents. Overall, mothers were rated as giving more affection than fathers.



Did You Know?

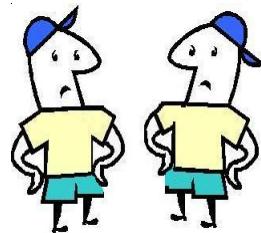
Fact about Twins:

- › 18% to 22% of twins are left-handed compared with under 10% for non-twins.

Twins Ties to Each Other

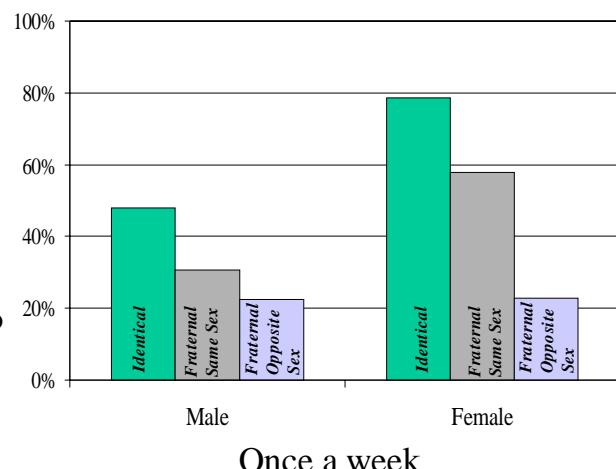
MIDUS twins were asked about both the positive and the negative parts of their adult relationship with each other.

- › Identical twins tended to give each other more positive ratings than their fraternal counterparts. They were also most likely to care about and open up to their twins. For example, identical twins were most likely to rate their twin as more understanding and reliable. Fraternal opposite-sex twins tended to have the least positive ratings of each other, and also provided the lowest rating when asked if their twin understood them.
- › In another comparison, respondents were asked whether their twin was more likely to criticize them, get on their nerves, make too many demands, or let them down. All groups of twins agreed that their twin did not often let them down. However, identical twins tended to rate their twins as more critical and demanding than fraternal twins did.



Frequency of Contacts

There were a lot of differences in how much the twins keep in touch with each other. Identical twins were much more likely to contact their twin once a week than either fraternal same-sex or opposite-sex twins were. And there was a strong difference between men and women in how often they stay in touch. Both male and female fraternal opposite sex twins tended *not* to keep in touch, with around 20% of each group contacting their twin once a week.



Did You Know?

Fact about Twins:

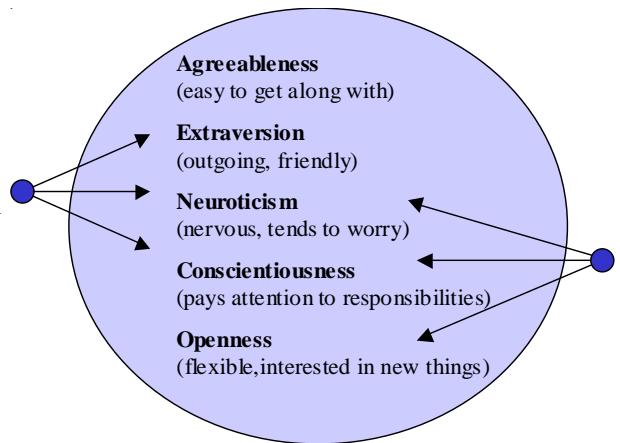
- › Twins have been known to develop their own “language” that only they understand. This process is known as “cryptophasia”.

Similarities in Personalities and Well-Being

We asked twins to answer a series of questions about their personality characteristics and their well-being. Examples of what we learned are given below.

Personality Characteristics

Identical Twins
most similar on
these.



Fraternal Twins
most similar on
these.

Aspects of Well-Being

Identical Twins
most similar on
these.



Fraternal Twins
most similar on
this.

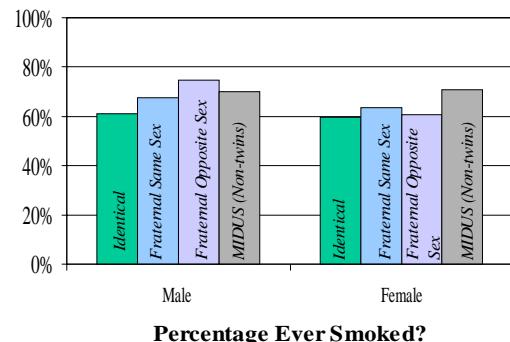
Above we show the areas in which identical and fraternal twins were most similar to each other. Overall, identical twins were much more similar to each other than fraternal twins.

Twins and Health Habits

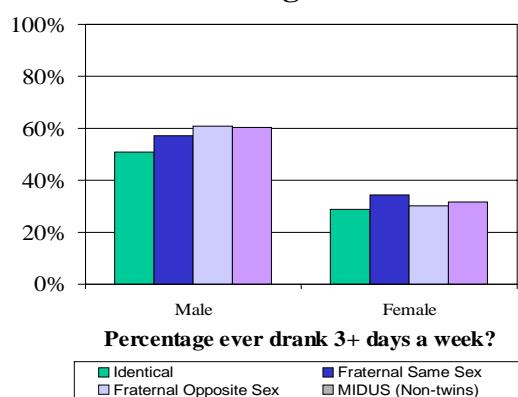
Overall, male twins were slightly more likely to report having regularly smoked during their lives than female twins. Male and female identical twins had the lowest rates of smoking and non-twin males and females had the highest levels of smoking.



Twin Smoking Habits



Drinking Habits



Respondents were asked if there had ever been a time during their life when they drank three or more days per week. While identical twins reported somewhat less habitual drinking than fraternal twins, there was a big difference when males were compared with females. Among all twins, males were far more likely to report habitually drinking during some time in their life, a pattern found in the non-twin population as well. However, identical male twins were slightly less likely to report habitual drinking compared to other males.



Answers to Pop Quiz

1. False. Orville and Wilbur Wright were not twins; however, they had fraternal twin siblings.
2. True. Liberace, born May 16, 1919, had a twin who died at birth.
3. True. Elvis twin brother, Jesse Garon Presley, died at birth on January 8, 1935.
4. Jose Canseco, born in Cuba on July 2, 1964, has a twin, Ozzie. Ozzie is also a baseball player.
5. On the family tree, you are first cousins; genetically, you are the same as half-siblings.
6. The "Recht Sisters" (both 6'6") are the "tallest living female twins" now. They have just been recognized by Guinness as the tallest recorded female twins.
7. In Nigeria's Yoruba tribe, 46 of every 1,000 pregnancies are fraternal twins.
8. On December 14, 1952, the first successful separation of conjoined twins was performed at Mount Sinai Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio.

Did You Know?

Fact about Twins:

- › The scientific study of twins is known as "gemellology."

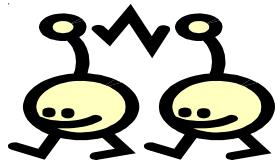


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Life Quality of Twins

Overall, twins rated themselves as generally satisfied with their lives. Moreover, this was true across all type of twins. When it comes to feeling sad, there also seem to be advantages to being a twin. People who are not twins in MIDUS reported feeling sad more often than twins.



Phone # or Address Change?

Stay in Touch!
Keep us Informed!



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WE VALUE YOUR INPUT!

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