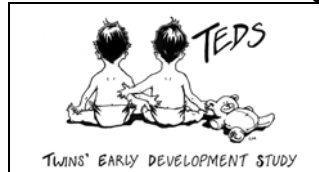


TEDS NEWS

The newsletter for all families taking part in TEDS



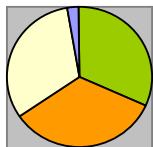
TEDS, Research Centre, 113 Denmark Hill, Freepost LON7567, LONDON, SE5 8YZ
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Some of you have been with us for over three years now, while some of you have joined just recently. We welcome all of you to Issue No.2 of the TEDS Newsletter.

How we contact you...

A while ago the Office of National Statistics (ONS) wrote to you about the National Twins Plus Register and about TEDS. Remember, we are not allowed to know your name, or any other detail about you until you request more information about us first. If you are reading this newsletter, you asked to hear more about TEDS at that early stage.

So far ONS have contacted around 24000 families with twins born in 1994, 1995 and 1996 in England and Wales. The response has been fantastic, and TEDS is still growing!



- 1994 births
- 1995 births
- 1996 births
- Withdrawn

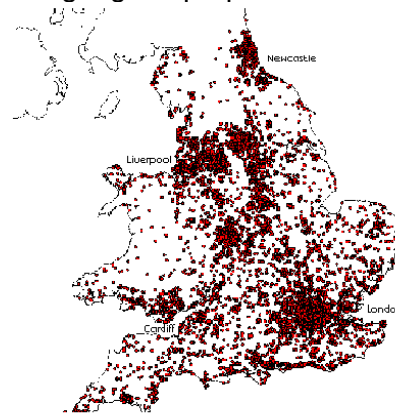
About You...

We contact as many families with twins born in '94, '95 and '96 as we can find, and encourage everyone to join us. You will see as you read through this newsletter that one of the most important issues for TEDS is that our families represent the population. This means that we need a full range of beliefs, lifestyles, ethnicity, ages, views, twin types...we could go on!

Part of this is the need to be sure that we reach families living in a wide variety of areas. Some of you live in Scotland, Ireland and abroad, but, as we'd expect, the majority of TEDS families still live in England and Wales.

The map shows a red dot for every family still living in England or Wales with twins born in 1994 who responded to TEDS in the first two years. The clusters of dots show towns and cities throughout the country. With this map and

other analyses, we can be confident that we are reaching a good proportion of the population.



All of this may sound a little impersonal to you, but the photos and letters you send to us help to put some faces to names. It makes a big difference to us - please keep it up!

What next?

Our offices are crammed full with completed booklets – thank you! While everyone should have received our Welcome to TEDS booklet, other things you receive will depend on when your twins were born.

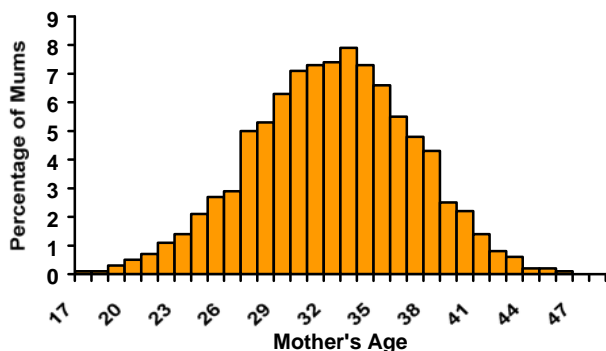
By December 1999, families with twins born in 1994 and 1995 will have received games and questions near the twins' second, third and fourth birthdays. About 800 of these families will also be involved in the home visit phase of TEDS, started earlier this year. This involves two members of the TEDS team going into homes and giving game-like developmental tests to the twins. These tests are similar to the games we send you to play with your twins. We are interested in language development and other skills children learn. So far we have seen over one hundred families!

Families with twins born in 1996 are a little different. Unfortunately, we cannot send them the two-year old booklets, but we will stay in touch with these families for later stages of our research.

Results?

TEDS has a long way to go, but we can share some of our early findings of the study with you. These results are from 1994 births only. You provide us with so much information that there is a lot for us to do before we get results!

As you may know, the chance of having twins increases with age. The graph below shows age of TEDS mothers when they gave birth to the twins. Where do you fit on the graph?



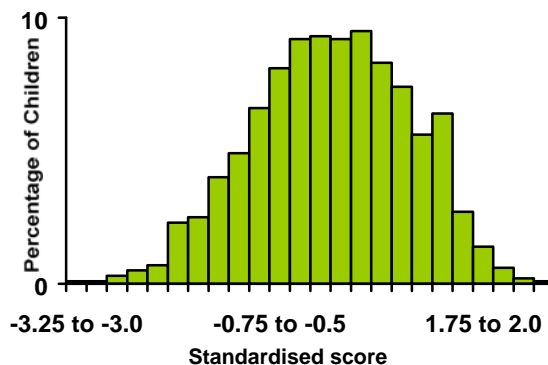
Like the map, this graph indicates that we have a good proportion of the population of families with twins in terms of the age of our mums.

For the same reasons it is important that the twins themselves represent the wide range of ability we find in the population.

The games and questions we sent when the twins were two years old seemed quite difficult. In fact, some parents felt that we were expecting too much for the twins' age.

It is important to remember that every child is individual: no child will learn everything another learns at exactly the same time - not even identical twins! The games were designed to cover as many different skills as possible, to allow us to get a full picture of what the twins had learned. This way we could truly reflect **every** child's ability.

The next graph illustrates this. It shows what we would expect - there are lots of children with about average ability for their age, and fewer children at the top and bottom end of the scale.



As you know, the main aim of TEDS is to look at the influence of genes and environment on development, by comparing identical twins and fraternal (non-identical) twins.

One of the most exciting findings so far is the subject of an article we recently had published in one of the top scientific journals (see reference) which received widespread publicity in the major newspapers, *New Scientist* and *Newsnight*. Through the hard work of parents completing our games and questions when their twins were two years old, we were able to look at vocabulary development at this early age.

Our results show that the influence of genes and environment differs for children within the normal range of language development and those developing more slowly. We looked at children whose vocabulary scores were in the bottom 5% - that is whose vocabulary was developing the most slowly. The influence of genes was almost three times greater than that for the vocabulary development of the rest of the children.

This finding is exciting for researchers. The more we know, the more we can use preventative treatments to help children who are at risk for delayed language development. Remember that a genetic effect within a certain environment says nothing about the possibility that a different environment might lead to different effects.

If you would like to read more about our results, ask your library for a copy of:

Dale, Philip S. et al (1998) "Genetic influence on language delay in two year old children" Nature Neuroscience Vol. 1(4), pp 324-328

If you would like to learn more about our publications, please write and ask to be added to the publications mailing list.

There are well over 16000 families involved in TEDS. Every one is extremely valuable to us.

Thank you for making TEDS a unique resource, and for helping with our research.