

**RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF
PARENTS OF YOUNG TWINS REGARDING
PLACEMENT OF TWINS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

2015

Report prepared by Dr Lynn Cherkas for TAMBA

Introduction

The main purpose of the survey is to assess whether primary schools have a “twin policy” and how involved parents are in the decision to place their twins in same or different classes.

Parents of twins who are registered with TAMBA were asked about the factors influencing their choice of primary school for their twins.

In addition, those parents whose twins already attend primary school were asked about their twins’ experience of being kept together in the same class or separated into different classes.

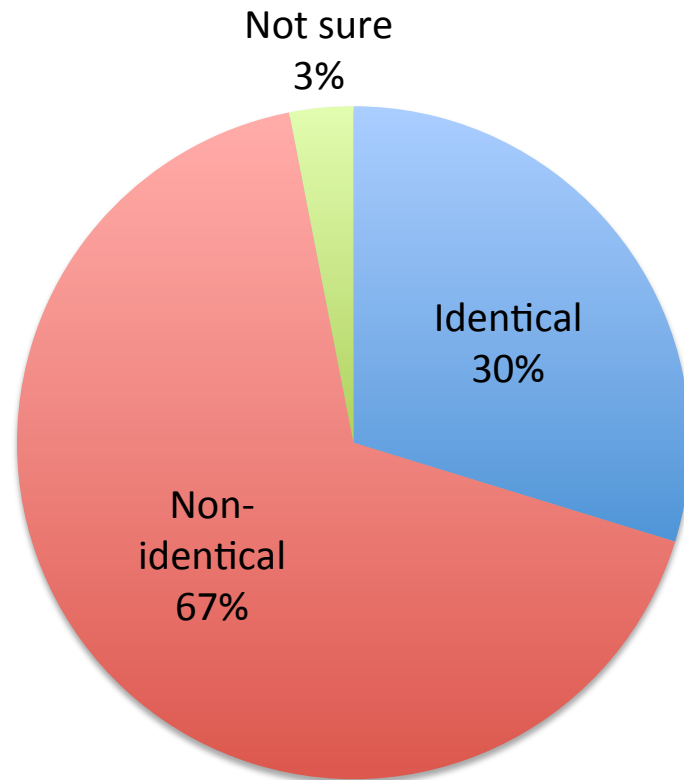
The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire targeting TAMBA members via social media and a TAMBA newsletter.

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Q1: Are your twins identical (MZ) or non identical (DZ)?

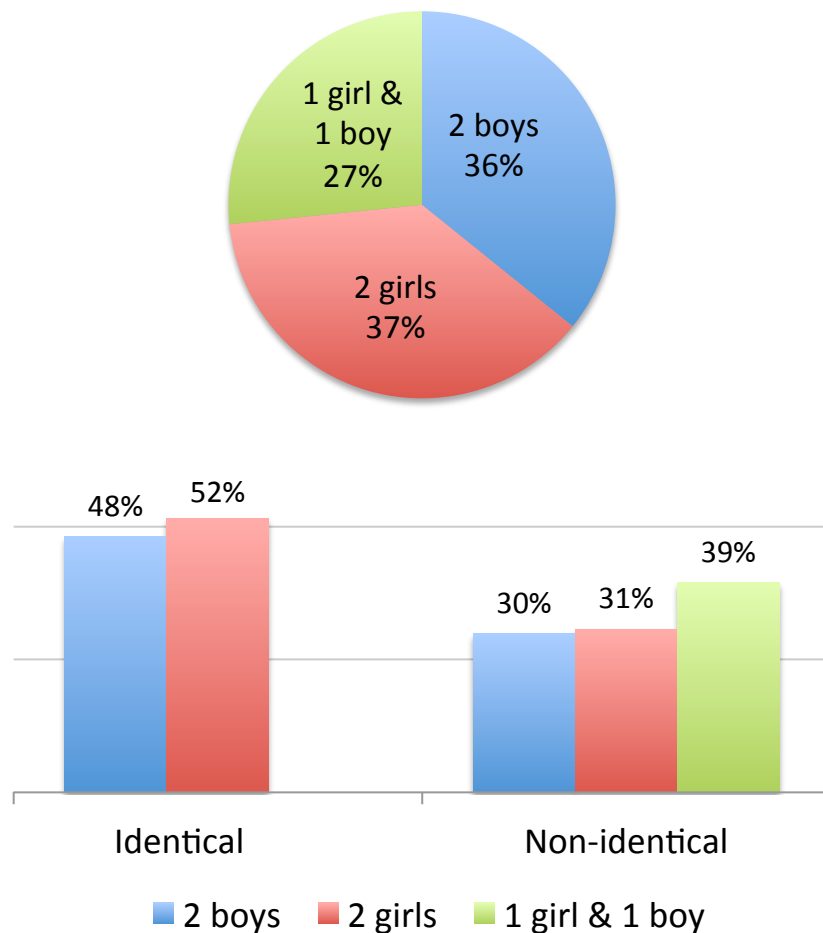
(Base: All, n=1,173)



- ❑ 1,173 parents of twins completed the questionnaire.
- ❑ Nearly one-third (30%) were parents of identical twins (mono-zygotic or MZ) and two thirds (67%) were parents of non-identical twins (di-zygotic or DZ).
- ❑ These proportions are representative of the known proportion of identical to non-identical twins of 1/3 to 2/3.

Q2: Are your twins boys, girls or 1 girl and 1 boy?

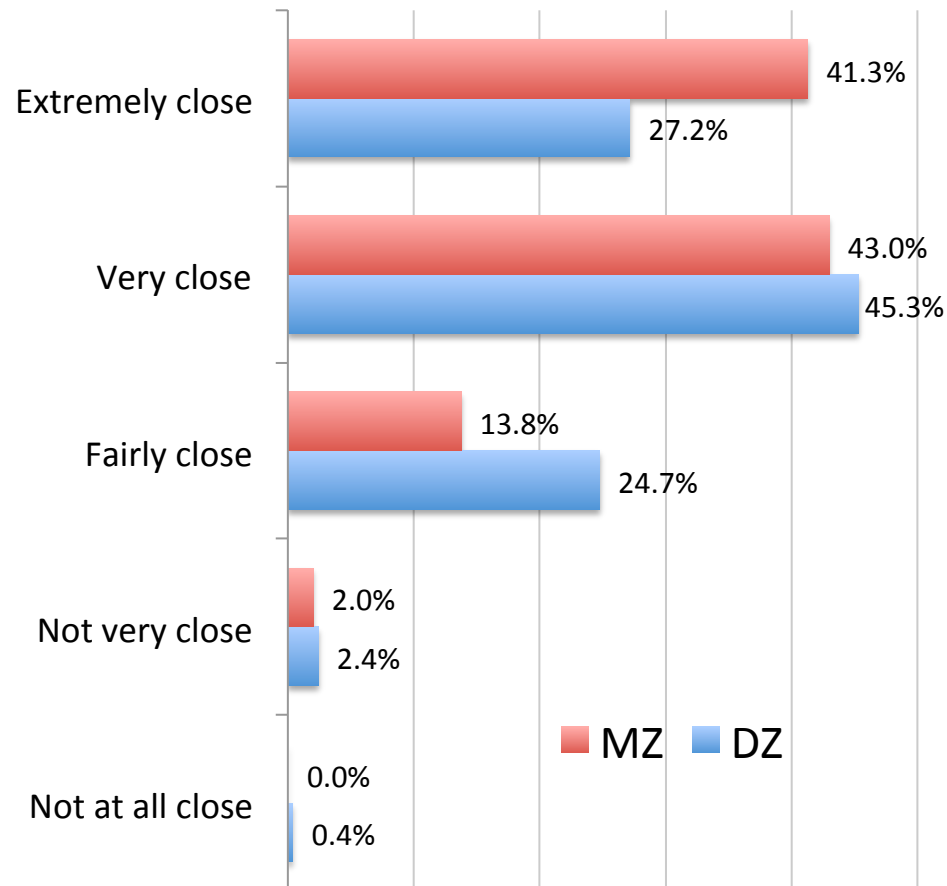
(Base: All, n=1,173)



- Male and female twins are equally represented in the survey.
- Both the identical and same-sex non-identical twin pairs have similar proportions of 2 boys and 2 girls.
- However, only 39% of the non-identical twins are opposite sex pairs. This is slightly lower than the expected proportion of 50%.
- This may reflect the proportion of opposite sex twin pairs on the TAMBA database, as it is possible that parents of opposite sex DZ twins perceive and/or experience fewer issues in raising their twins and are therefore less likely to contact or be involved with TAMBA.

Q3: How close would you say your twins are to each other?

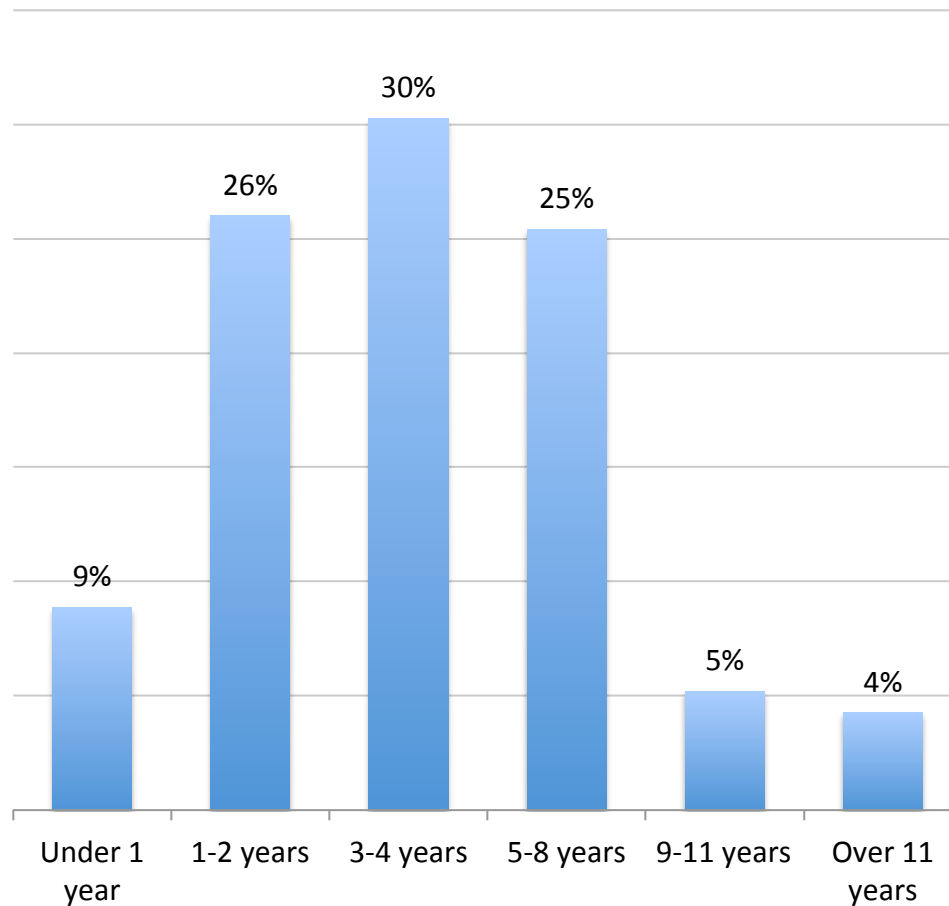
(Base: Parents of twins of known zygosity =1,137; MZ=349; DZ=788)



- ☐ Parents of identical (MZ) twins were significantly more likely to say their twins were extremely close than parents of non-identical twins (41% compared with 27%).
- ☐ More than 4 in 5 parents (84%) of identical twins felt their twins were extremely or very close as did 7 in 10 parents (72%) of non-identical twins.
- ☐ Very few parents felt their twins were not close.

Q4: How old are your twins?

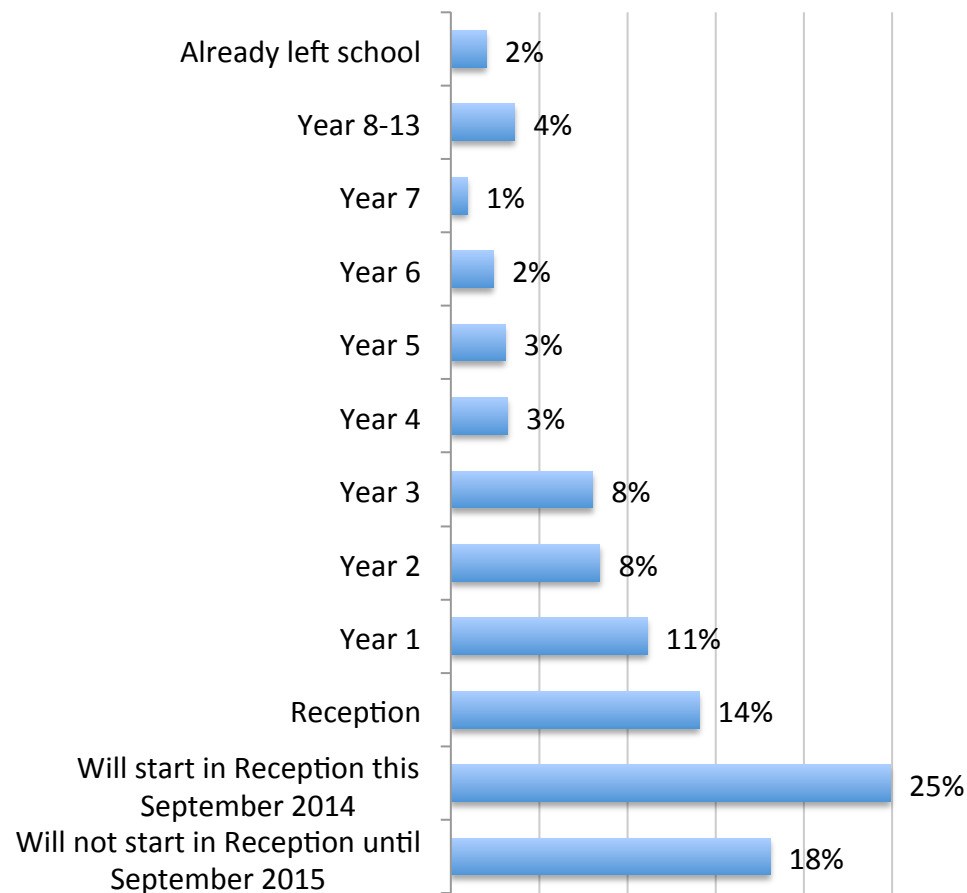
(Base: All, n=1,173)



- One-third of parents (35%) had twins under 2 years old.
- These parents were not included in the main survey as they have not yet been through the school admission process, but were asked their intentions re twin placement (see Q6).
- Over half the parents (55%) had twins between 3-8 years old.
- Only one in ten respondents (9%) had twins over the age of 9 years.

Q5: In which school year are your twins?

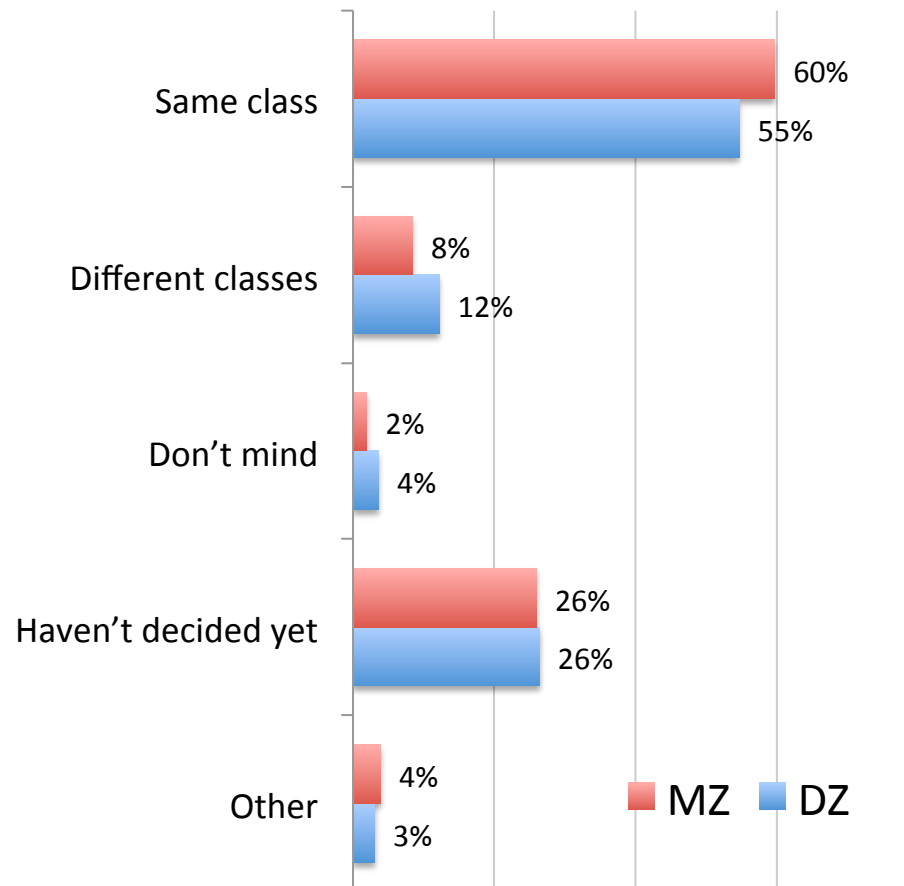
(Base: Parents of twins aged 3 years+, n=746)



- 135 respondents had 3 year old twins who will not start school until September 2015.
- These parents were not included in the main survey as they have not yet been through the school admission process, but were asked their intentions re twin placement (see Q6).
- Parents whose twins will start Reception this year (25%) were asked their views about twin placement in primary school as they have already experienced the school admission process.

Q6: Would you like your twins to be in the same class or different classes when they start at primary school?

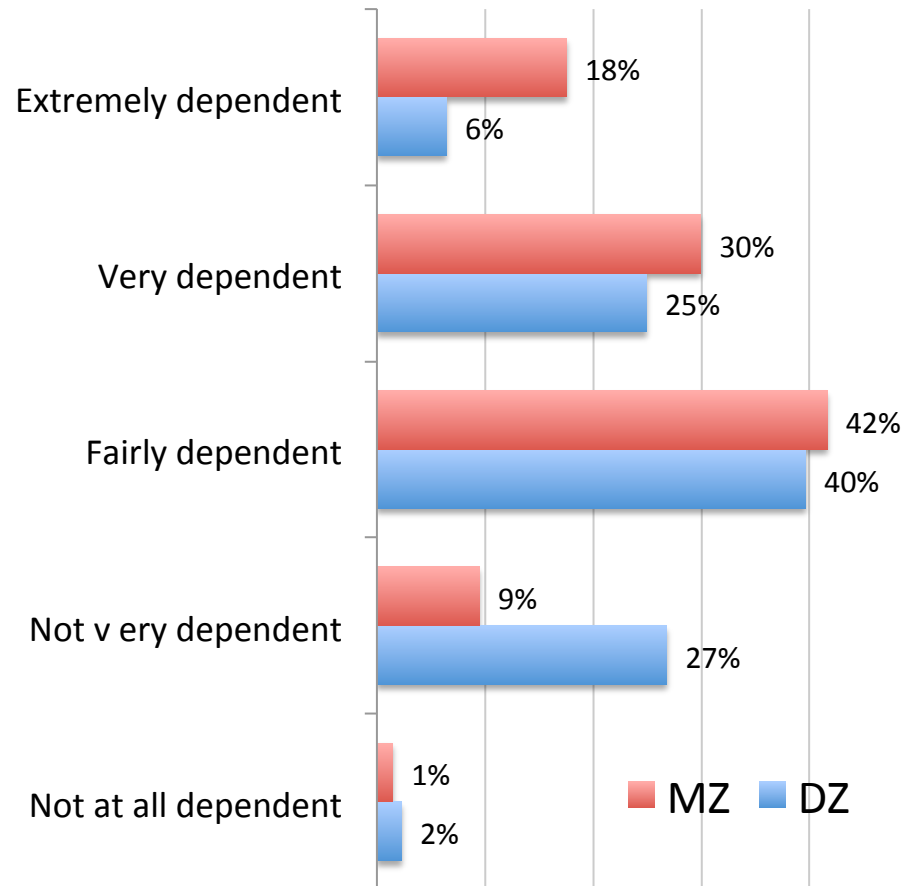
(Base: Parents of twins aged 3 and under who will not start school this year, MZ=154; DZ=360)



- Parents were asked their intentions regarding placement of their twins when they do start primary school.
- Over half would like their twins to be in the same class. There was little difference between parents of identical or non-identical twins (60% and 55% respectively).
- One quarter (26%) had not yet decided whether to separate or keep their twins together in class.
- Only around in ten (8% of MZ parents and 12% of DZ parents) had already decided to separate their twins into different classes.

Q7: How dependent on each other would you say your twins were before going to primary school?

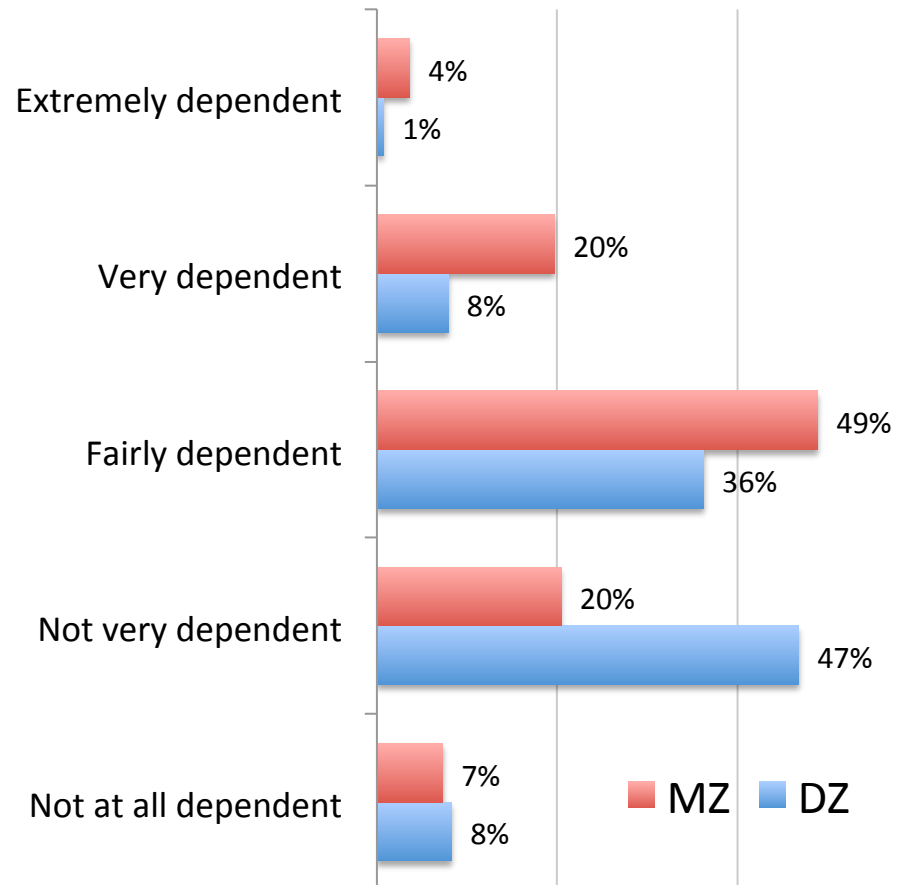
(Base: Parents of twins already at school, MZ=137; DZ=265)



- ❑ Two in five parents of both identical and non-identical twins would describe their twins as being fairly dependent on each other (42% and 40% respectively).
- ❑ However, parents of identical twins were significantly more likely to feel their twins were extremely or very dependent on each other before starting school (nearly half, 48%) compared with parents of non-identical twins (31%).
- ❑ Parents of non-identical twins were 3 times more likely to say their twins were not very dependent on each other compared with parents of identical twins (27% compared with 9%).

Q8: How dependent on each other would you say your twins are now?

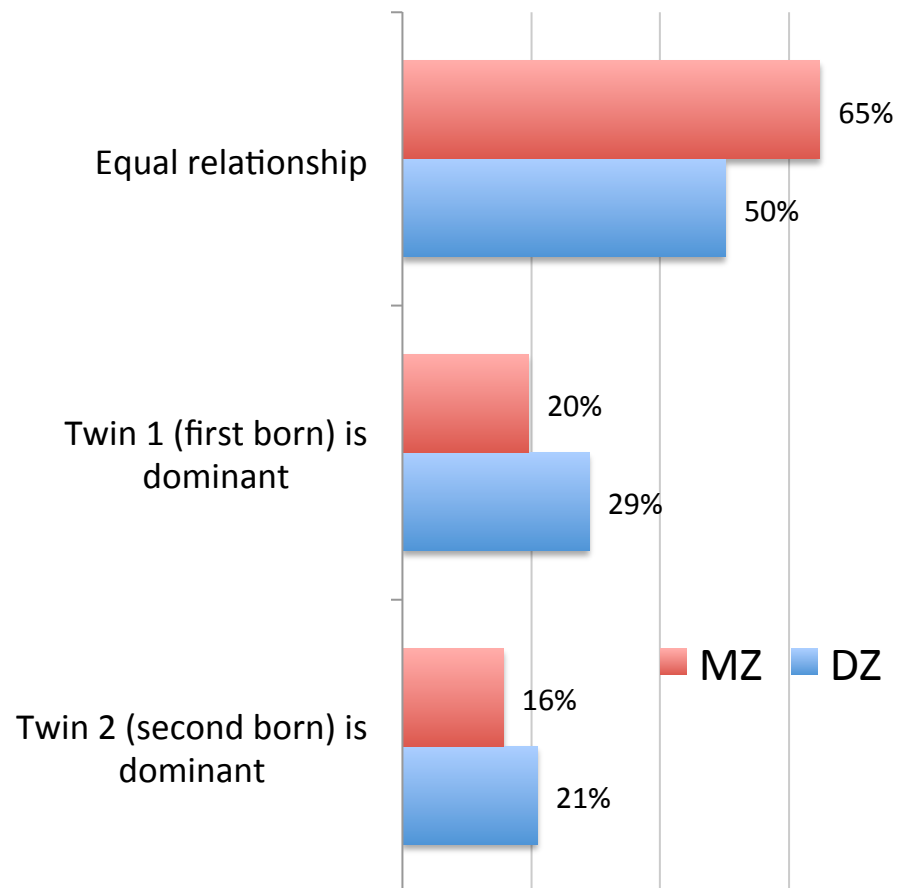
(Base: Parents of twins already at school, MZ=137; DZ=265)



- Once twins start school, parents clearly feel they become less dependent on each other.
- This applies to both identical and non-identical twins.
- However, parents of identical twins are still significantly more likely to feel their twins are extremely or very dependent on each other; one quarter of MZ parents (24%) feel this compared with one in ten (9%) of DZ parents.
- Over half the parents of non-identical twins feel their twins are now not very or not at all dependent on each (55%); compared with one in four parents of identical twins (27%).

Q9: Would you say your twins are equals or does one twin tend to dominate?

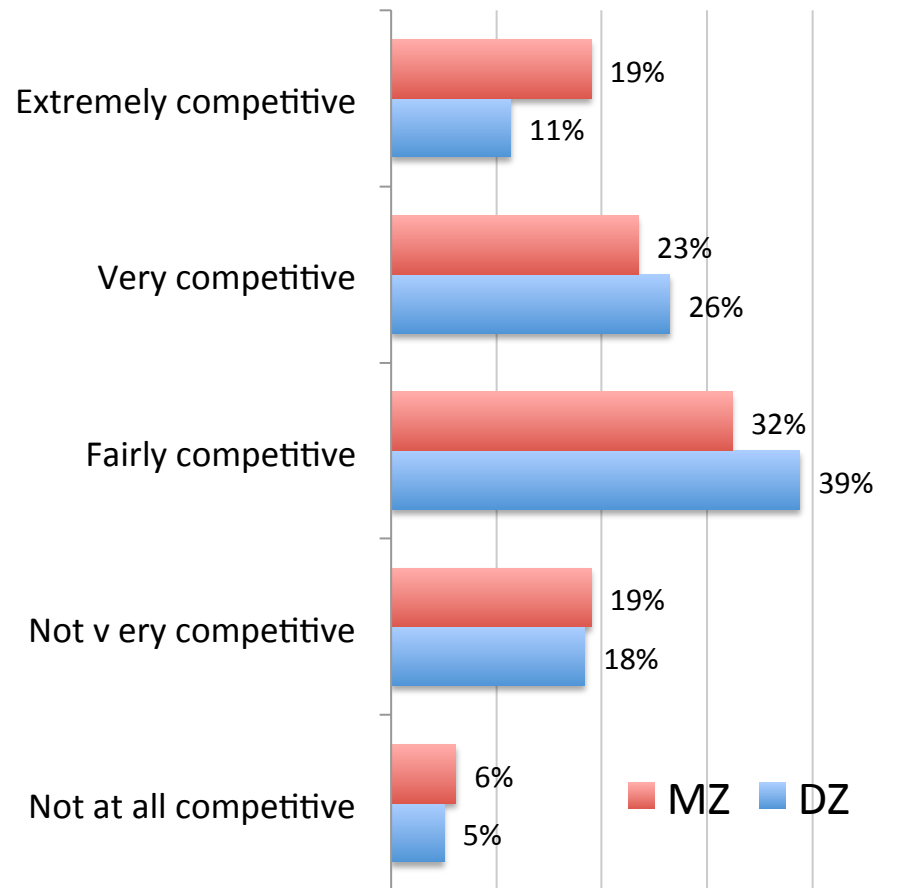
(Base: Twins at school or starting Reception in 2014; MZ=179; DZ=397)



- ❑ Parents of identical twins are significantly more likely to feel their twins have an equal relationship compared with parents of non-identical twins.
- ❑ As many as two-thirds of parents of MZ twins (65%) feel they have an equal relationship, compared with half the parents (50%) of DZ twins.
- ❑ When parents feel there is a dominant twin, it is marginally more likely to be the first born twin. This may be due to the fact that the first born twin is likely to be the larger twin, but this is not always the case.

Q10: How competitive would you say your twins are with each other?

(Base: Twins at school or starting Reception in 2014; MZ=179; DZ=397)



- Whilst some parents feel their twins are competitive with each other, other parents feel there is little if any competition between their twins.
- Identical twins are significantly more likely to be described as extremely competitive (1 in 5) than are non-identical twins (1 in 10).

Q11. Did your twins start at the same primary school (or will they in September 2014)?

(Base: Twins at school or starting Reception in 2014;n=594)

- All but one parent responded that their twins went to the same school.
- The reason given by the parent whose twins went to different schools (Q12) was “ In that time other school offered preschool got free” which suggests a misunderstanding and twins went to a different school than originally intended, rather than different schools from each other.

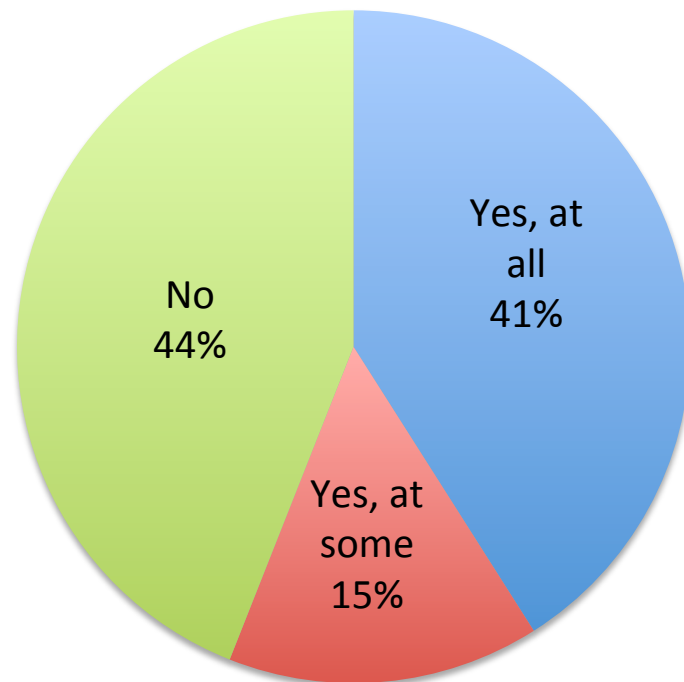
Q13. In which area of the country do (will or did) your twins attend primary school?

Most frequently represented Local Education Authorities			
Kent	27	Bromley	12
Hampshire	22	Suffolk	10
Surrey	22	Gloucestershire	9
Cambridgeshire	15	Staffordshire	9
Norfolk	15	West Sussex	9
Hertfordshire	14	North Yorkshire	8
Essex	13	Somerset	8
East Sussex	13		

Results within these regions can be inspected on request.

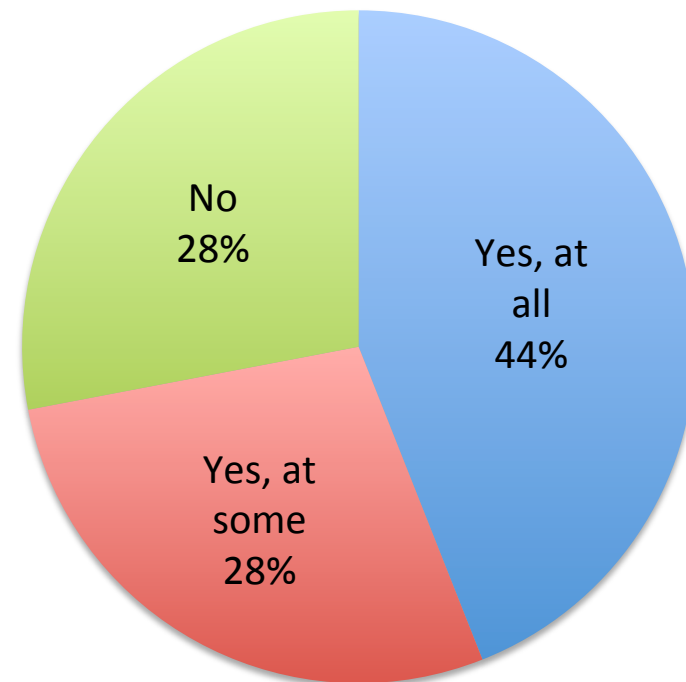
Q14: During the school admission process, could you discover whether or not the school/s you were interested in had a "twin policy" regarding placement of twins in same or different classes?

(Base: Twins at school or starting Reception in 2014; n=570)



Q15: Was the "twin policy" discussed during your visit to the school?

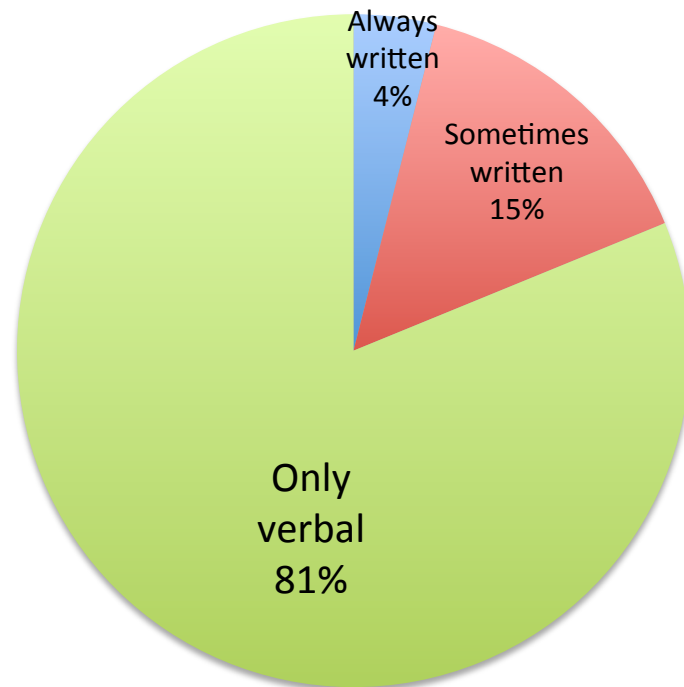
(Base: Twins responding "yes" to Q14, n=304)



More than two in five parents (44%) could not find out if any of the schools they were interested in had a "twin policy". When the school did have a "twin policy" this was not always discussed during the visit to the school.

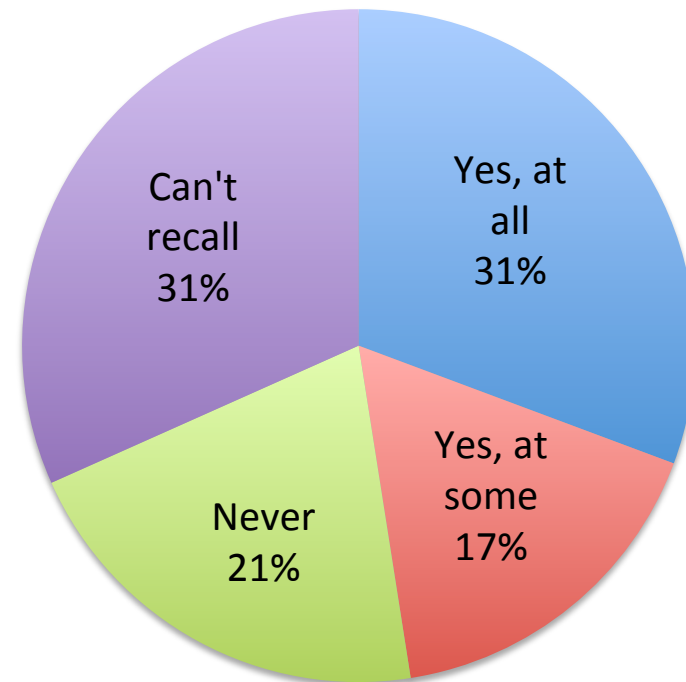
Q16: Was the twin policy written down or only verbal?

(Base: Twins responding "yes" to Q14, n=304)



Q17: Were you given the reasoning behind the schools' "twin policy"?

(Base: Twins responding "yes" to Q14, n=304)



In the vast majority of schools (81%) twin policy was only verbal. Only 4% of parents reported that it was always written down. One in three parents (31%) could not recall if they were given the reasoning behind the twin policy, but nearly half (48%) could recall being given the reasoning behind this policy from at least some of the primary schools.

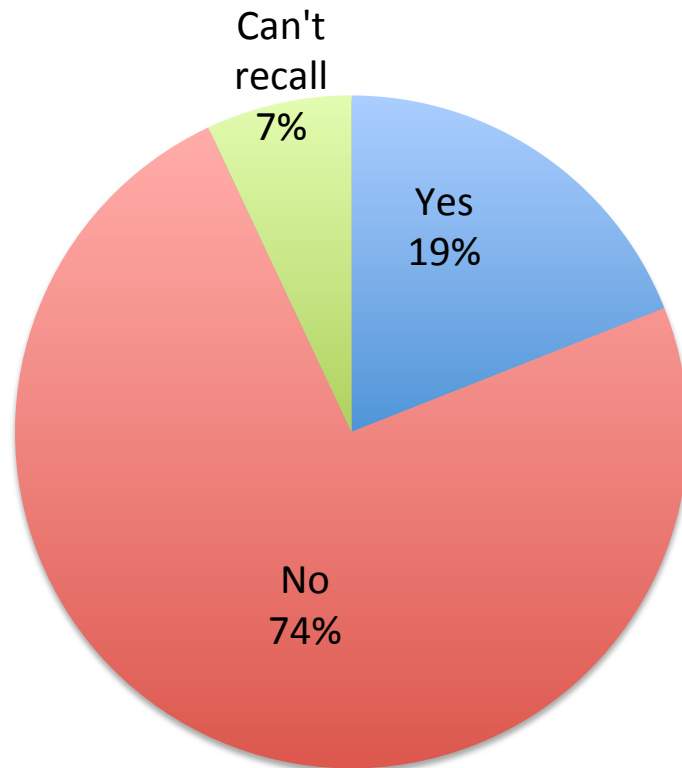
Q18: What were you told if the school policy was to "keep twins together"

- In some cases the school only had one class entry which meant twins had to be kept together**
- When the school had more than one class, most frequent reason for keeping twins together was to help them settle in:**
 - "helps them feel more secure"
 - "helps them to settle in as they are undergoing a big life change anyway"
 - "keep them together unless their education is suffering"
- In addition, many parents reported that the school did discuss twin placement with them:**
 - "policy is to discuss and agree with parents"
 - "parental choice"
 - "twin policy at all schools we look around was to treat each family individually"
- However, a few parents reported the school had a strict policy:**
 - "school knew best"
 - "no reason given"

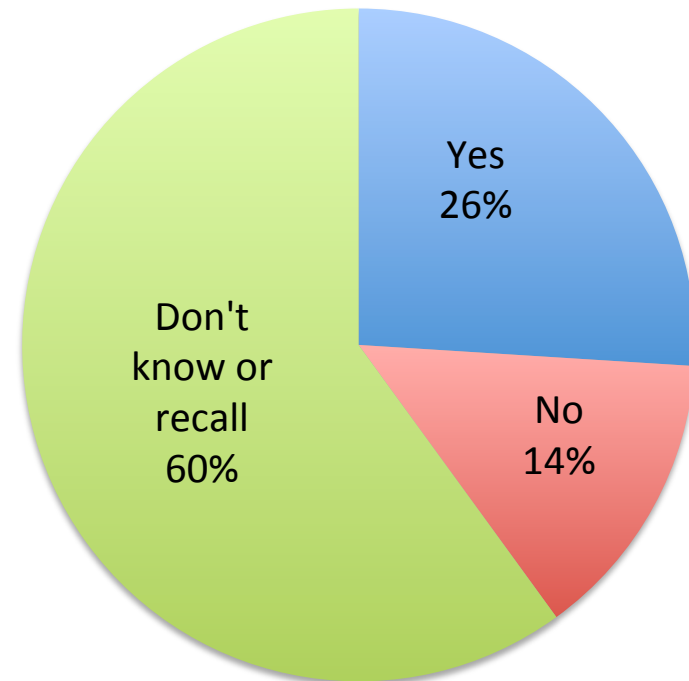
Q19. What were you told if the school policy was to "separate twins"?

- Main reasons given by schools for separating twins relate to encouraging them to become independent and develop individuality:**
 - "twins are separated to give them their own identity"
 - "To help them develop individually and not as a set"
- Schools also felt it helped twins make their own friendship groups:**
 - "to give them chance to be more independent and make own friends"
- Avoiding competition and comparison between twins was another reason cited:**
 - "they said it makes them less competitive"
 - "best for twins to be separated so they are not compared"
- Many parents reported that they were consulted about twin placement:**
 - "decision made with parents"
 - "we were told they would do whatever we wanted. They had done both and recognised the pros and cons of both approaches"
- However, some schools were adamant it was better to separate twins:**
 - "It is just what we do"
 - "Schools considered it normal and correct practice to separate twins"
 - Head's policy – if we didn't like it, do not apply"

Q20: Did you ever encounter an attitude of "if you don't like our policy, go elsewhere?"
(Base: Twins responding "yes" to Q14)

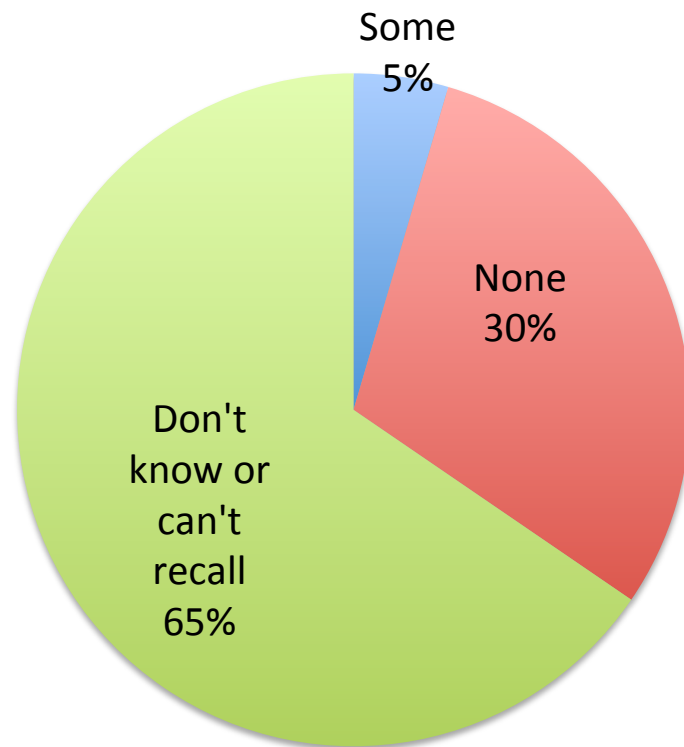


Q21: Did alternative schools in the same area offer a different "twin policy"
(Base: Twins responding "yes" to Q14)

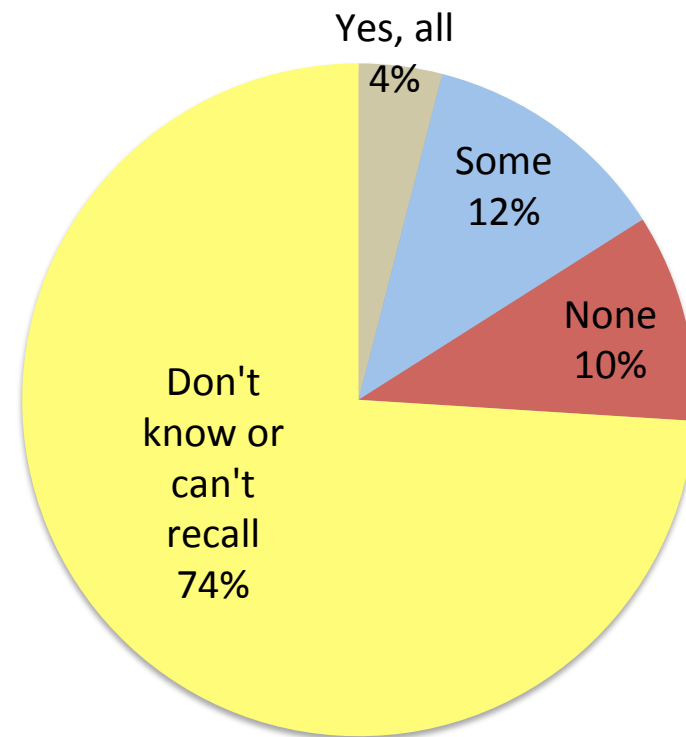


One in five parents (19%) reported being told to look elsewhere if they did not like the school policy regarding twin placement. A minority of parents (14%) found all schools in the area offered the same twin policy, but the majority of parents (60%) did not know or could not recall if this was the case.

Q22: As far as you are aware, did primary schools of interest have access to up to date research findings on twin placement (eg. TAMBA material designed to support policy-making)?



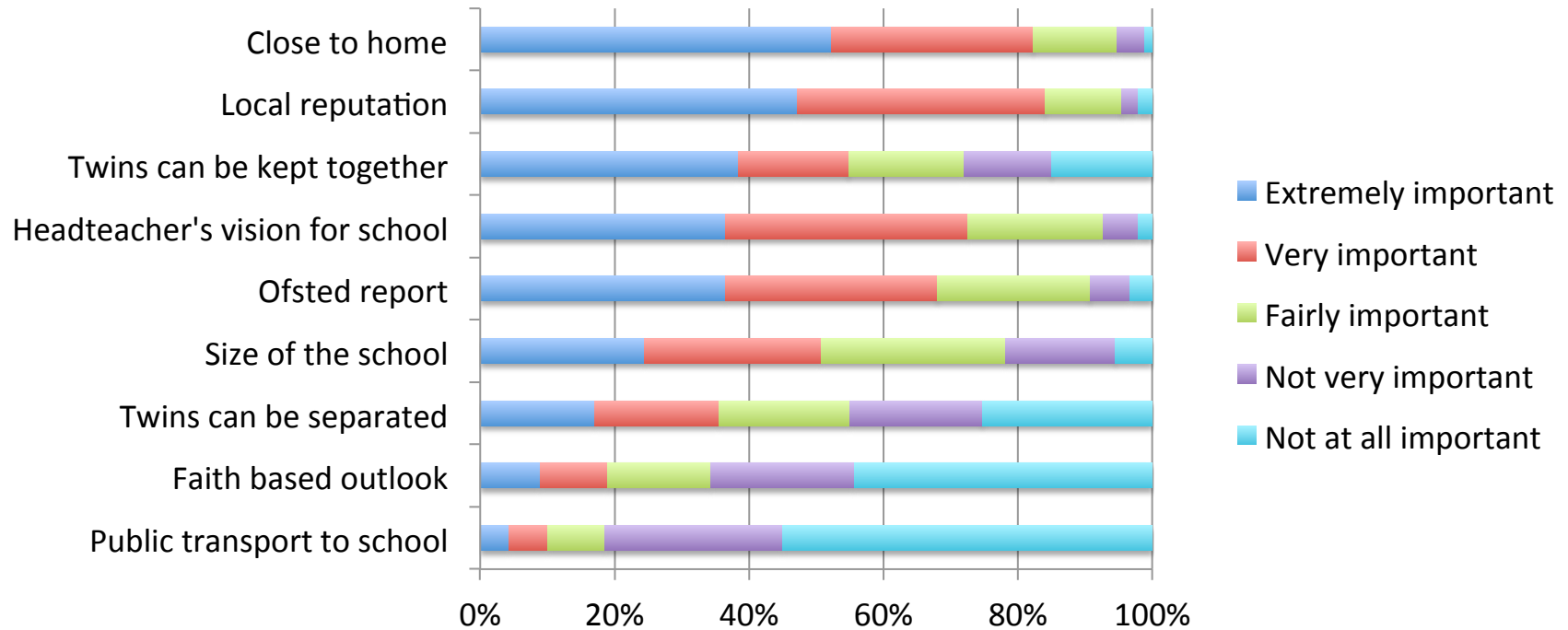
Q23: As far as you are aware, where schools had a given "twin policy", would they review it in the future?



The majority of parents did not know (or could not recall) whether schools had access to research findings on twin placement (65%) or whether schools would review "twin policy" in the future (74%).

Q24: How important was each of the following factors in influencing your choice of primary school for your twins?

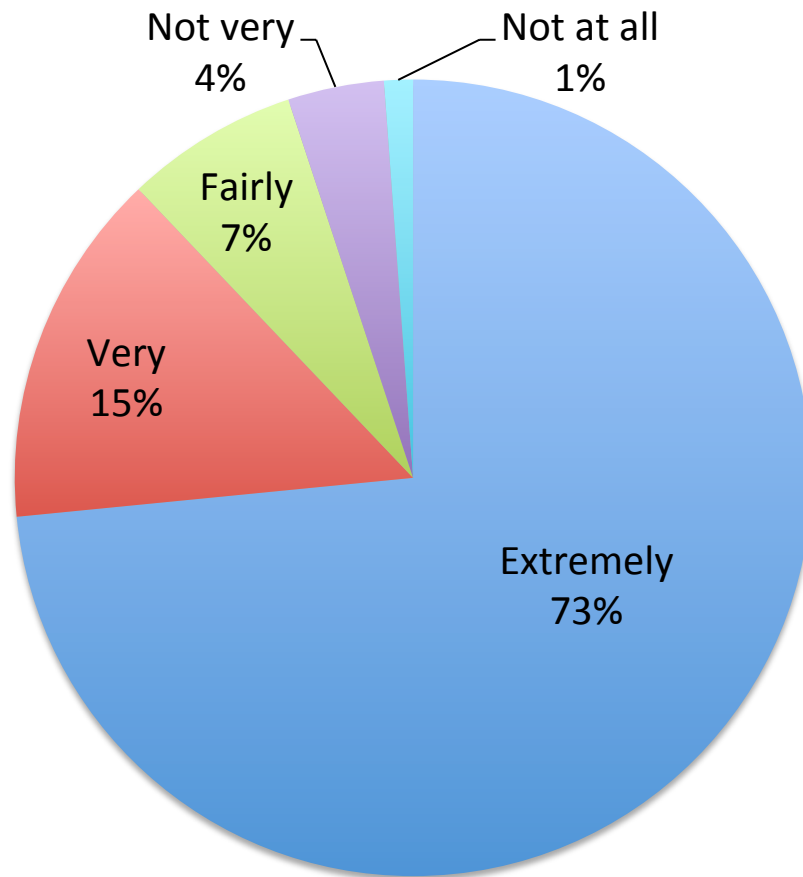
(Base: Twins at school or starting Reception in 2014; n=570)



Proximity to their home and the reputation of the school were extremely or very important factors in choice of primary school for over 4 in 5 parents (82% and 84% respectively). Keeping twins together was considered extremely important by nearly 2 in 5 parents (38%) as was the Headteacher’s vision and Ofsted report (36%).

Q25: How important was the location of the school/s attended by other sibling/s in the choice of primary school for your twins?

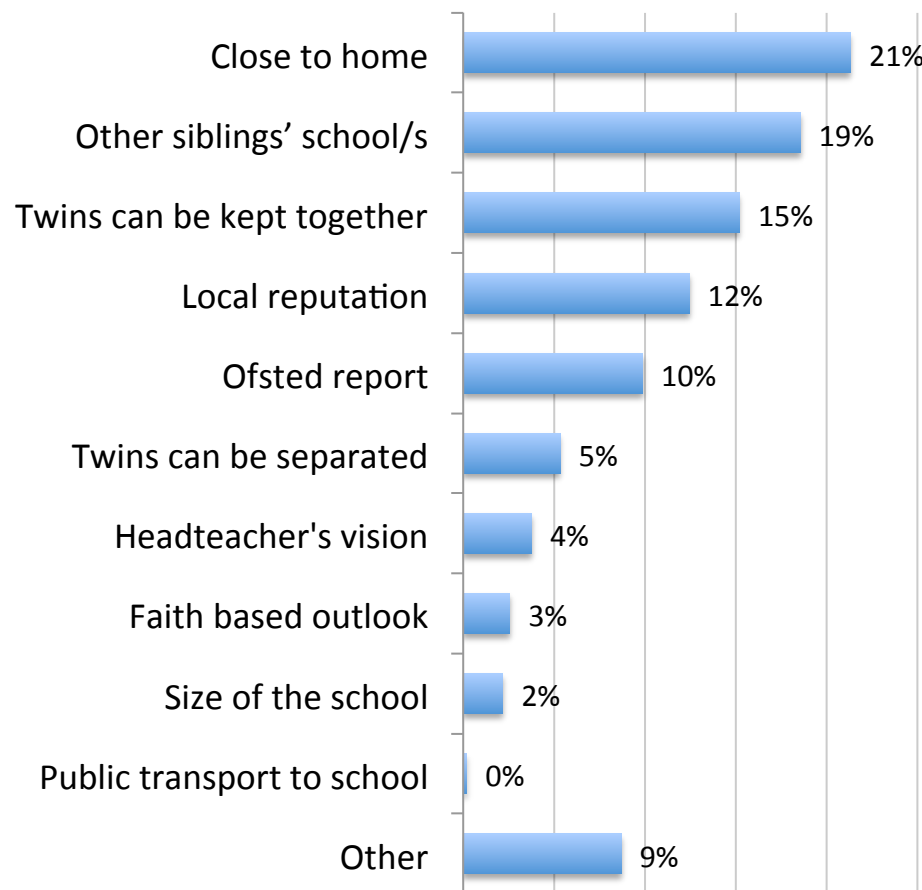
((Base: Parents with twins at school or starting Reception in 2014 having other children; n=256))



- Half the parents with twins at school or starting school this year did not have other children apart from their twins .
- Of those parents who did have other children (n=256), three quarters (73%) reported that the location of the primary school attended by other siblings was extremely important in their choice of primary school for their twins.

Q26: Overall, what was the single most important factor influencing your choice of primary school for your twins?

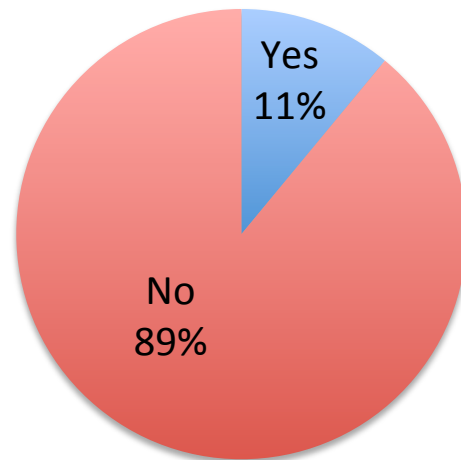
(Base: Twins at school or starting Reception in 2014; n=570)



- ❑ Being close to home and other siblings' school/s were most likely to be the most important factors in parents choice of school for their twins.
- ❑ Each were cited by one in five parents overall (21% and 19% respectively).
- ❑ However, among those parents having other children, more than one in three (37%) selected other siblings' school/s as being the most important factor in their choice of primary school for their twins.
- ❑ Whilst 15% of parents felt keeping twins together was the most important factor, this varied by zygosity, with 18% of parents of MZ twins and 13% of parents of DZ twins selecting this factor.

Q27 & Q28: Did you have to make any compromises in your choice of school in order to meet your wishes regarding placement of your twins (either together or separated)?

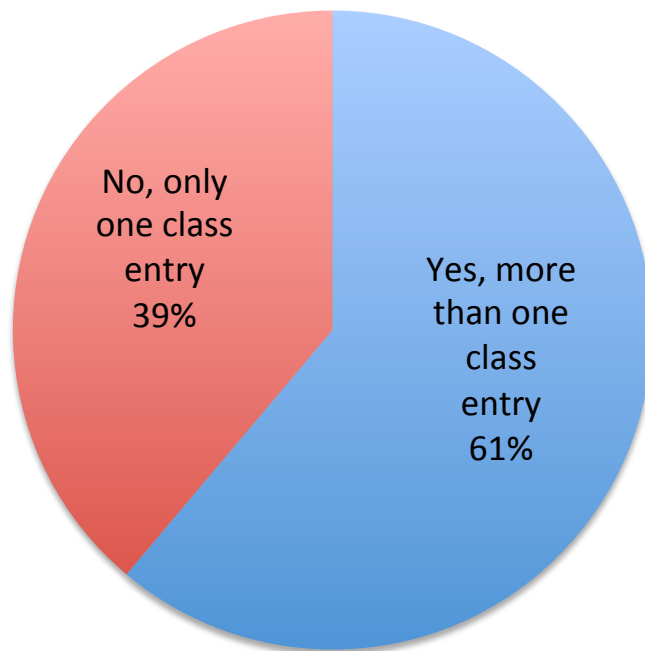
(Base: Twins at school or starting Reception in 2014; n=570)



- ❑ Most parents (89%) did not have to make any compromises in selecting the primary school for their twins.
- ❑ Among the one in ten (11%) who did, compromises (Q28) mainly related to:
 - ❑ **Twins being separated when parents wanted them kept together**
 - “only offered a school that separated twins, told we had no choice”
 - “it is the school of their elder siblings, only found out last week they will this year be separating twins regardless of parent wishes”
 - ❑ **Twins being kept together when parents wanted them separated**
 - “we had to accept our 5th choice school which only had one class”
 - ❑ **Having to travel to a school further away in order for twins to be kept together/separated according to parents wishes**
 - “My nearest school only has one class. I wanted my twins in different classes to develop independence and different friendships. We therefore have to travel further.”
 - “We had to move schools from the closest that they had attended nursery at as new head had uncompromising separation policy to a school much further away.”

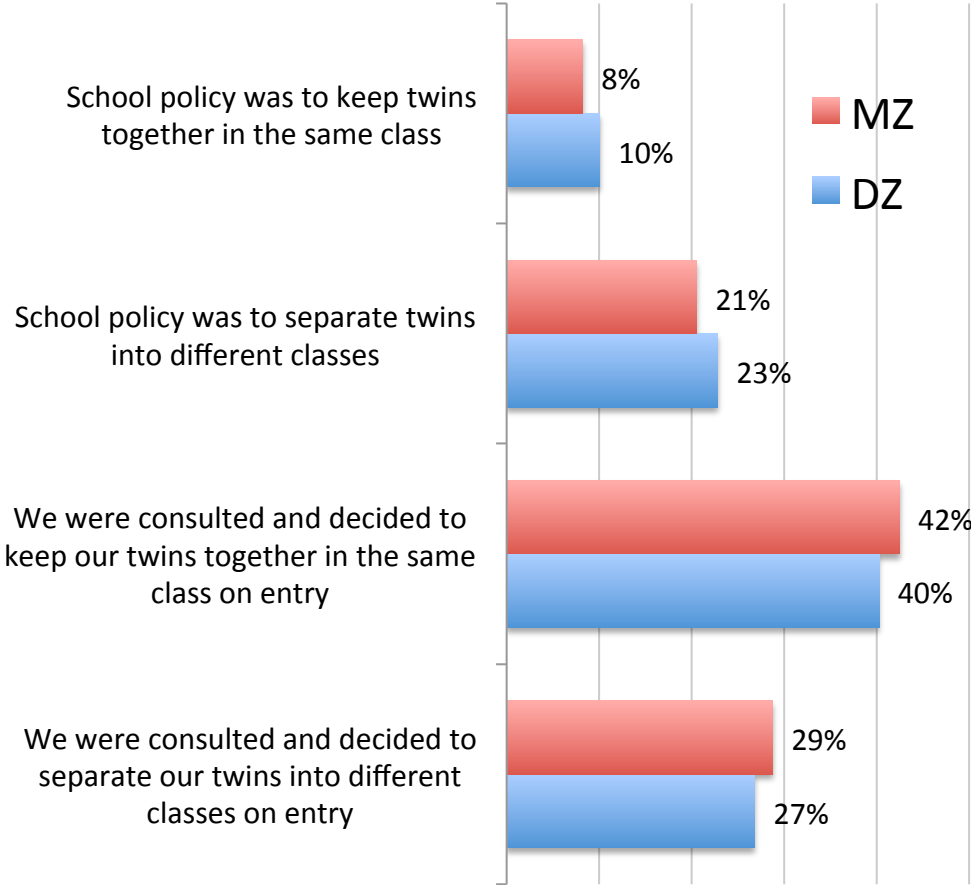
Q29: Does (or did) the primary school your twins attend (or attended) have more than one class entry?

Base: Twins at school (n=368)



- ❑ Three in five parents (61%) sent their twins to primary schools where there was more than one class at entry.
- ❑ These parents were asked further questions concerning the placement of their twins in the same or different classes.

Q30: When your twins started primary school, did the school have a policy of keeping twins together in the same class or separating twins into different classes OR were you as parents consulted about this decision? (Base: n=222)



- Two in three primary schools having more than one class at entry did discuss twin placement with parents (n=152)
- When given this option, parents were significantly more likely to keep their twins together than to separate them (3/5 and 2/5 respectively) and this preference did not vary with zygosity of their twins.
- When the school had a twin placement policy, they were twice as likely to separate twins into different classes as to keep them together. Responses did not vary with zygosity of the twins.

Q31-Q34

Parents sending twins to a primary school with a twin policy (i.e. parents were not consulted about twin placement) were asked the following questions (*Base: n=72*)

- Were you given to understand that the school policy would be flexible?**
 - Schools were equally likely to be flexible in their twin policy as not, with two in five parents (40%) responding that the school would be flexible and the same proportion (43%) responding that the school would not be flexible regarding twin placement. (The remaining 17% did not know or could not recall).
- Were your twins offered a trial period together/apart, after which this decision could be reviewed?**
 - However, the vast majority of schools (88%) would not offer the twins a trial period either together or apart after which the decision to separate the twins or keep them together could be reconsidered.

Q35 Why did you decide to keep your twins together in the same class when they started primary school?

(Base: Q30 - Parents consulted by school and deciding to keep their twins together in the same class, n=91)

- Ease of transition into school and the security of having each other were cited by many parents as reasons for keeping twins together. TAMBA advice on twin placement was cited by some in support of this decision.**

“We thought the process of starting school and separating from us would be traumatic enough without then taking their twin away from them as well.”

“Wanted secure start, rather than absolutely everything changing for them. Read Tamba research.”

- Some parents clearly felt their twins would suffer if they were separated.**

“They like to be able to see each other at all times. I felt that they would be anxious if put into separate classes.”

- Many parents felt it was fine keeping their twins together as they are not totally dependent on each other.**

“ They are both very individual characters but like to know the other is 'around' so happy to have own friends and interests but with a quick check every so often to see if the other is there”

- However some parents felt it was right for their twins to be together at the start of school, but did not necessarily keep them together during all primary school years.**

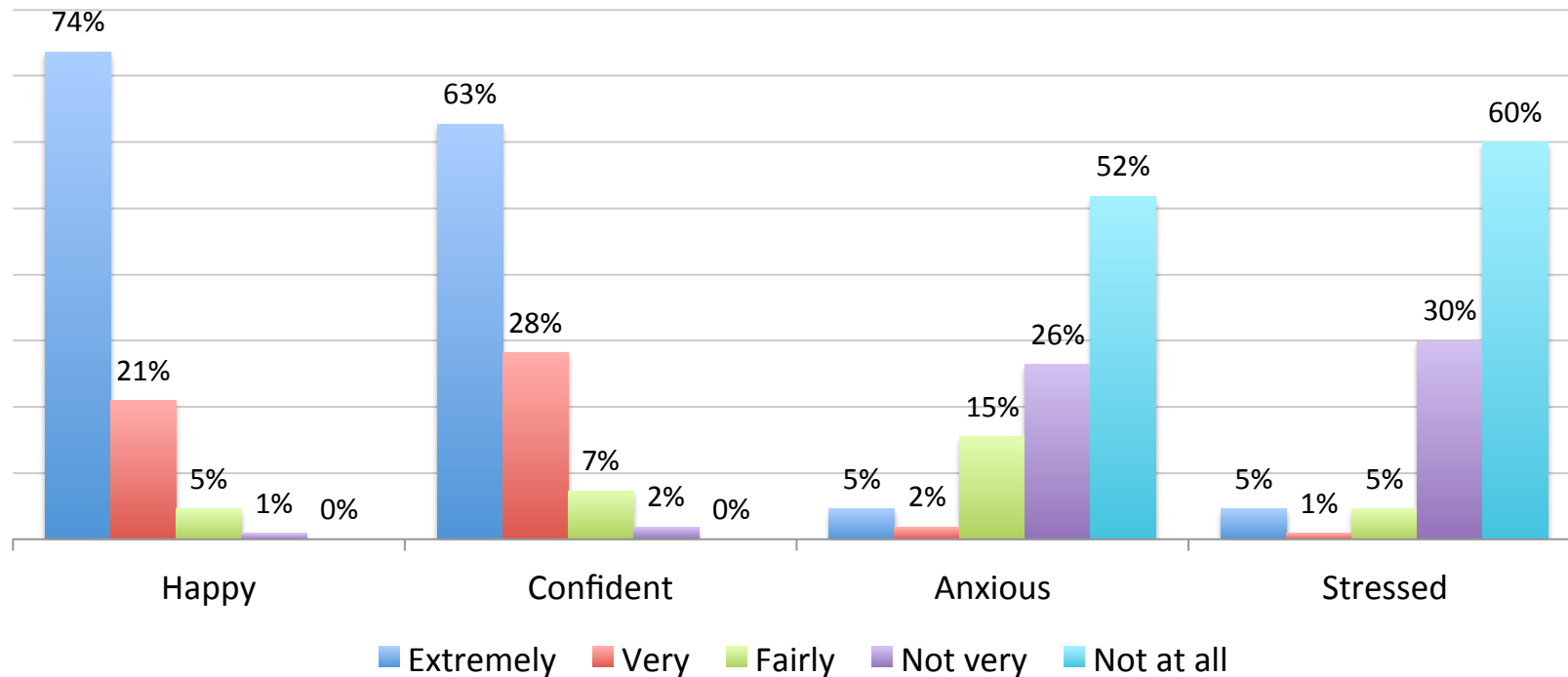
“They wanted to be together and other sets of twins joining at same time were also being kept together. They did 2 yrs together then split when they joined y 2. This has worked well for us.”

- A few parents cited practical reasons for keeping twin together.**

“Easier to deal with one teacher and the same style of teaching , same homework , assemblies, trips making it easier to manage . Knew that they would play with own friends but there for support if needed.”

Q36: How did you feel about your twins being in the same class at primary school?

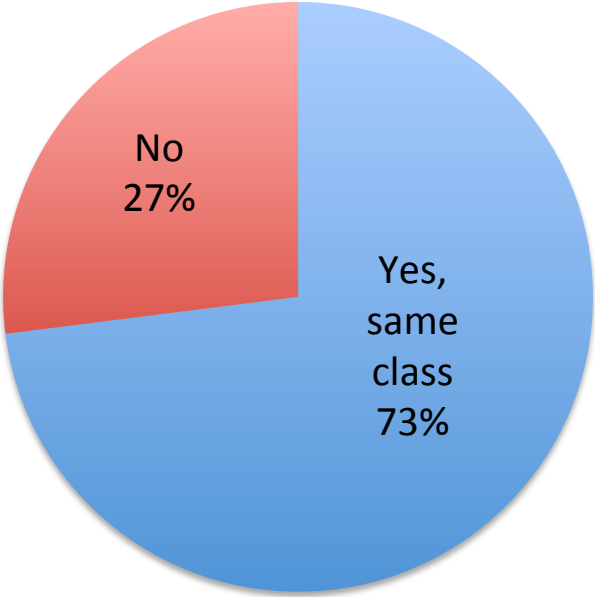
(Base: Parents of twins starting primary school in same class, n=110)



Almost all parents of twins who were kept together in the same class at primary school were extremely or very happy (95%) and confident (91%) with this placement. Only a small proportion of parents reported feeling at least fairly anxious (22%) or stressed (11%).

Q37: Are your twins still in the same class in primary school (OR if over 11, did they stay in the same class throughout primary school)?

(Base: Parents of twins starting primary school in same class, n=110)



Q38: Why did you decide to separate your twins into different classes at the same primary school?

(Base: Parents moving their twins from same class to different classes)

- One quarter of parents (n=30) did move their twins into separate classes later in primary school.**
- Most frequently endorsed reasons for this were:**
 - Too much competition between twins (10)
 - One twin dominated the other (6)
 - One twin over-reliant on the other (5)
 - Teachers compared the twins (5)
- Parents also suggested this was to enable twins to develop their individuality:**
 - “Allow them to develop separate identities. Stop one feeling responsible for the other.”
 - “It was felt both twins would gain from some time away from each other”
 - “They are individuals and needed to be apart.”
- Teachers not being able to tell twins apart was another reason given.**
 - “Wanted them to be their own person and make their own friends. They complained that staff and pupils got them mixed up.”
- In some cases separation was suggested by the twins themselves and for others it was a natural progression.**
 - “twin choice”
 - “Just felt the time right . Plus they had already made own friends and were more independent of each other.”

Q39. Why did you decide to separate your twins in different classes when they started primary school?

(Base: Parents of twins starting primary school in different classes, n=60)

- Encouraging the individuality of each twin and avoiding comparisons were frequent reasons given by parents separating their twins into different classes.**

“so they could develop their own identities and so other people would not compare them or treat them as one person”
- Some parents observed one twin was dependent on the other and felt separating them would be helpful.**

“ I felt they could only benefit from it. At the time my son was slightly dependent on my daughter and I wanted to dissuade that and encourage him to foster his own relationships in the class.”
- Parents also wanted their twins to be treated as individuals and to form their own friends, rather than being seen as a pair.**

“We wanted them to develop more independence and broaden their friendship circles. We wanted them seen as individuals and not as a pair.”

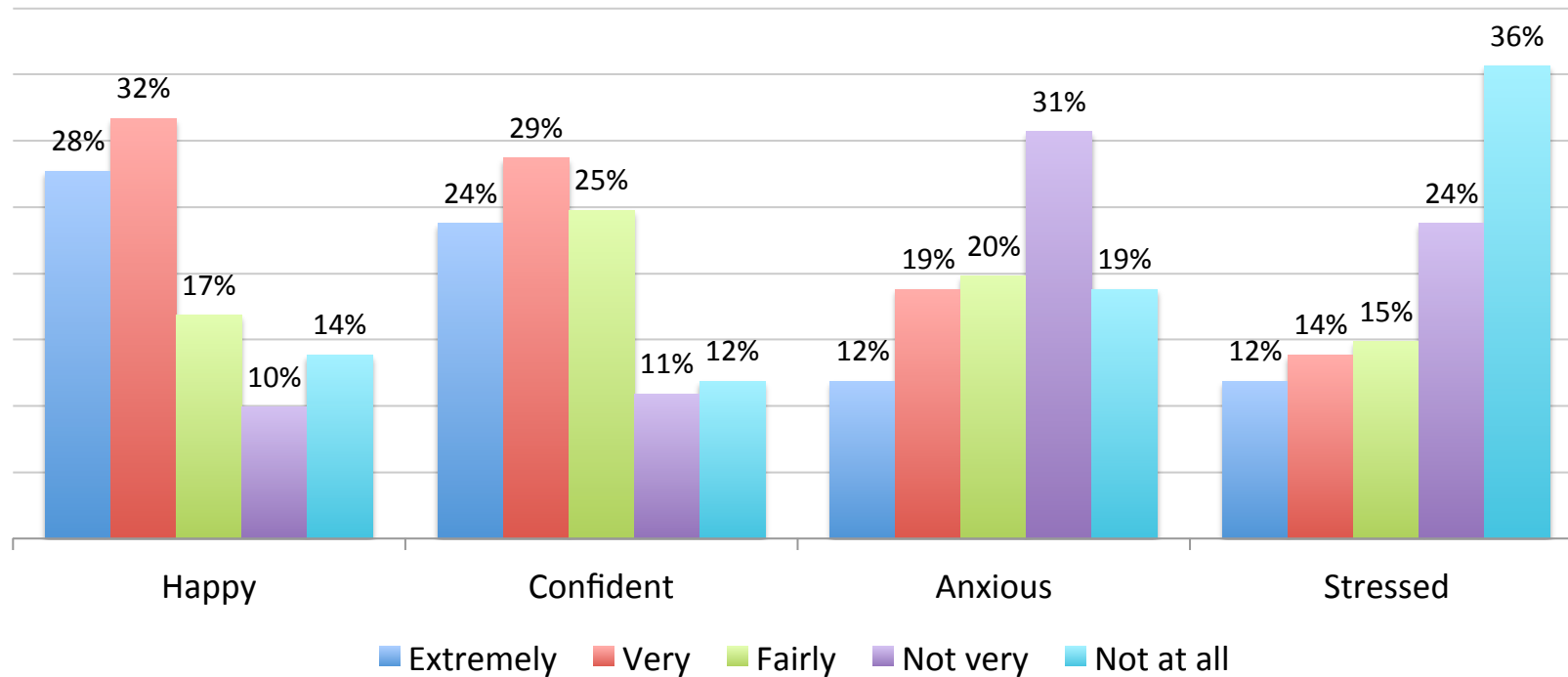
“Because they were very reliant on each other and had friendship issues at their nursery. It's the best decision we ever made the girls are so happy and have their own friends and are now able to grow as individuals rather than be referred to as the girls or the twins.”
- Avoiding competition between the twins or one twin dominating the other was another reason cited.**

“So they weren't so competitive and one being very dominant over the other”

“I felt they needed to be independent as very different characters, younger twin is a lot shyer than elder!”

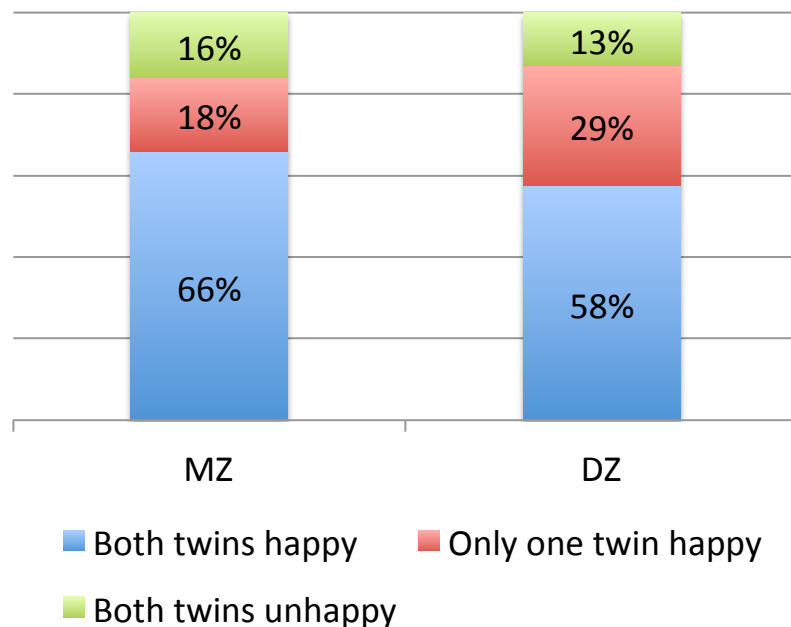
Q40: How did you feel about your twins being in different classes at the same primary school?

(Base: Parents of twins starting primary school in different classes, n=101)

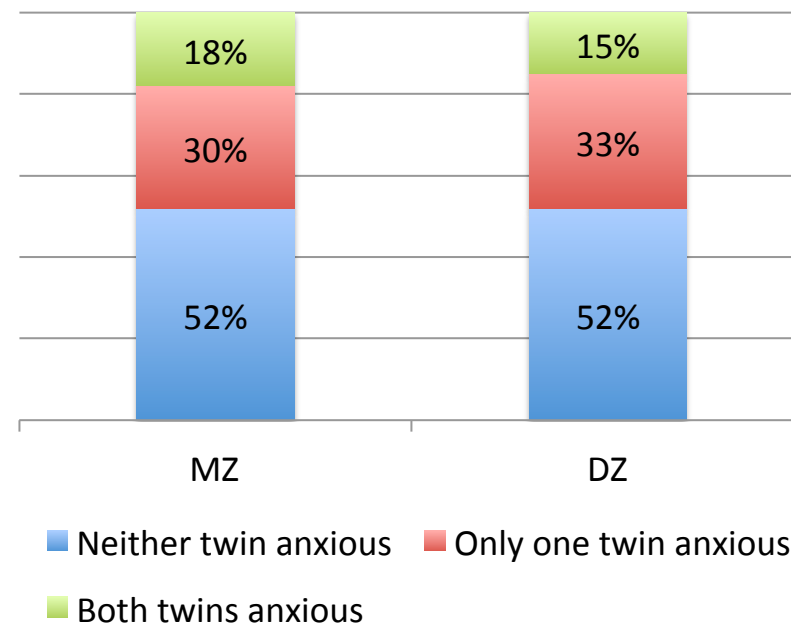


Whilst the majority of parents who decided to separate their twins into different classes were extremely or very happy (60%) and confident (53%) with this placement, these proportions are far lower than for those parents keeping their twins in the same class (see Q36). Furthermore, the proportion of parents feeling at least fairly anxious or stressed rose to 51% and 41% respectively. There were no significant differences in responses between parents of MZ or DZ twins.

Q41: How happy were your twins with the decision to separate them?
(Base: Parents of twins starting school in - or moved into - different classes, n=129)



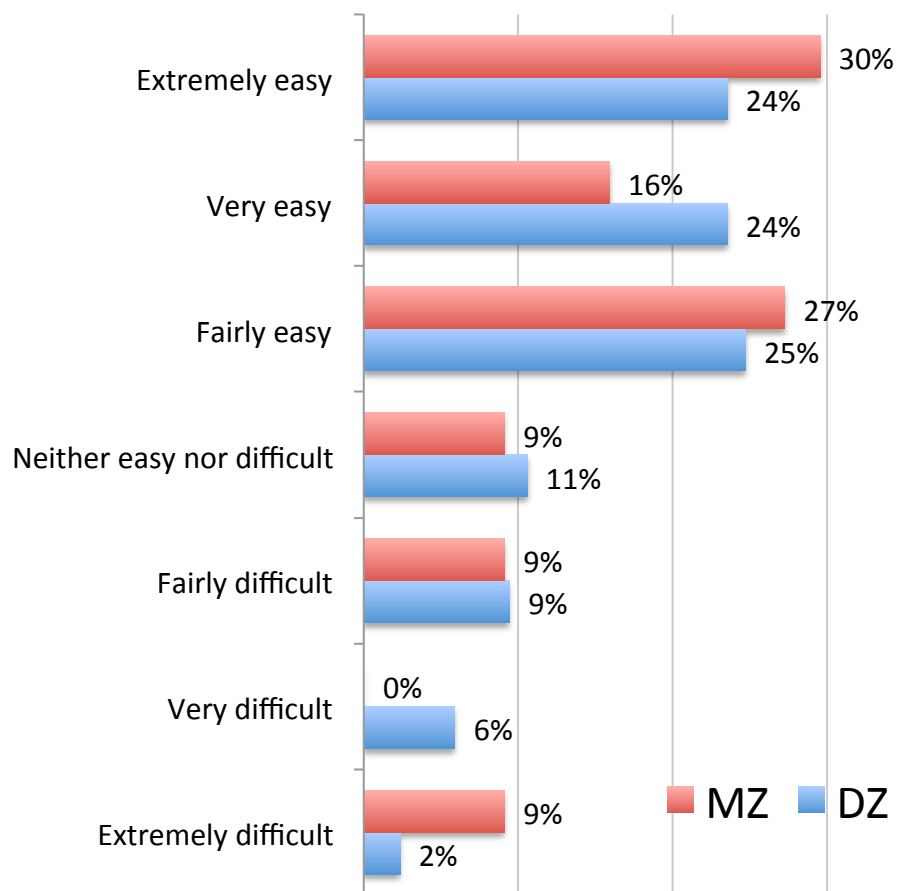
Q42: How anxious were your twins with the decision to separate them?
(Base: Parents of twins starting school in - or moved into - different classes, n=129)



Overall, 3 in 5 parents felt both their twins were happy with the decision to separate them (60%) and half the parents felt their twins were not anxious with this decision (52%). The remaining parents were twice as likely to report that only one of their twins, rather than both, was unhappy or anxious initially with the decision to separate them into different classes. Differences between zygosity were not significant.

Q43: How easy or difficult was it for your twins to separate at primary school?

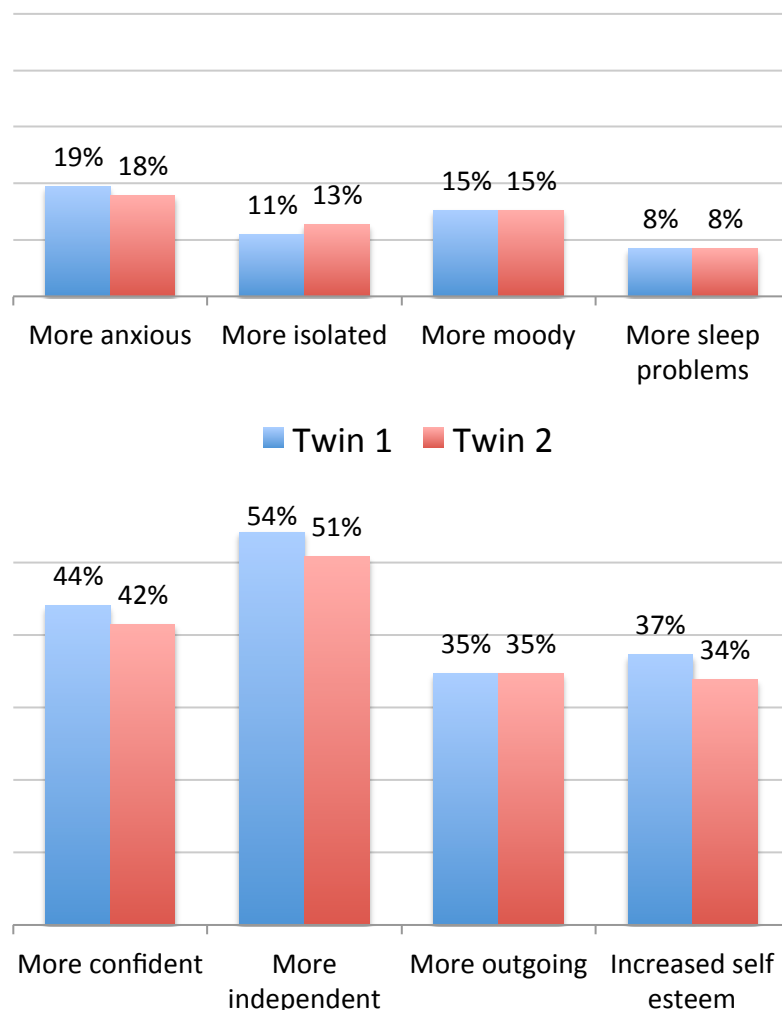
(Base: Parents of twins starting school in - or moved into - different classes, n=129)



- Although nearly half the parents reported some unhappiness or anxiety in their twins with the decision to separate them (Q42), only one in ten parents overall (9%) reported their twins found it extremely or very difficult to separate. The same proportion (9%) indicated their twins found it fairly difficult to separate.
- Three quarters of parents overall (73%) reported their twins found it extremely, very or fairly easy to separate.
- There were no significant differences between zygosity of the twin pairs in terms of ease of separation reported by their parents.

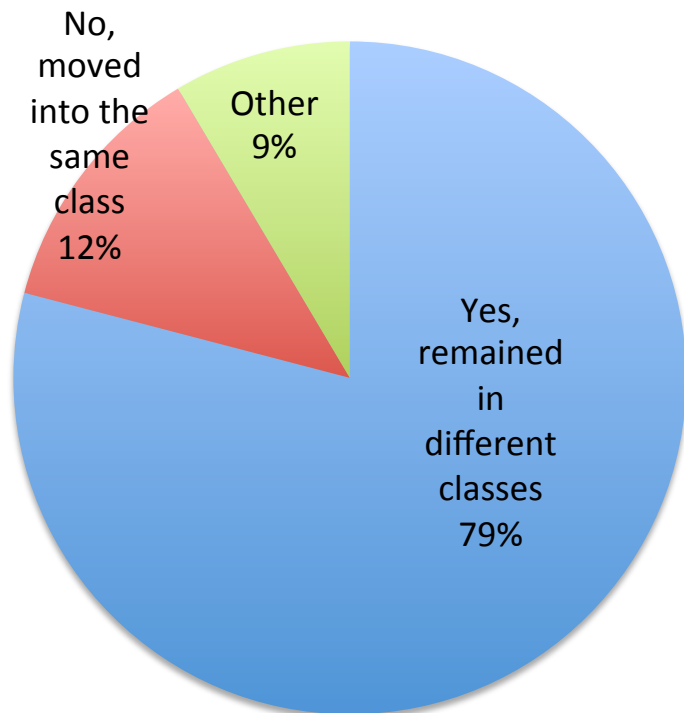
Q44: For each twin, please indicate how their behaviour changed, if at all, following their separation into different classes at primary school?

(Base: Parents of twins starting school in - or moved into - different classes, n=129)



- There were no differences in reported behavioural changes between the first and second born twins.
- Positive rather than negative behavioural changes were more likely to be reported in twins following separation.
- Around half the parents indicated their twin/s became more independent with nearly as many reporting increasing confidence. One third of parents reported their twin/s gained in self esteem and became more outgoing.
- Between one in ten (8%) and one in five (19%) parents reported negative behavioural changes in at least one of their twins.

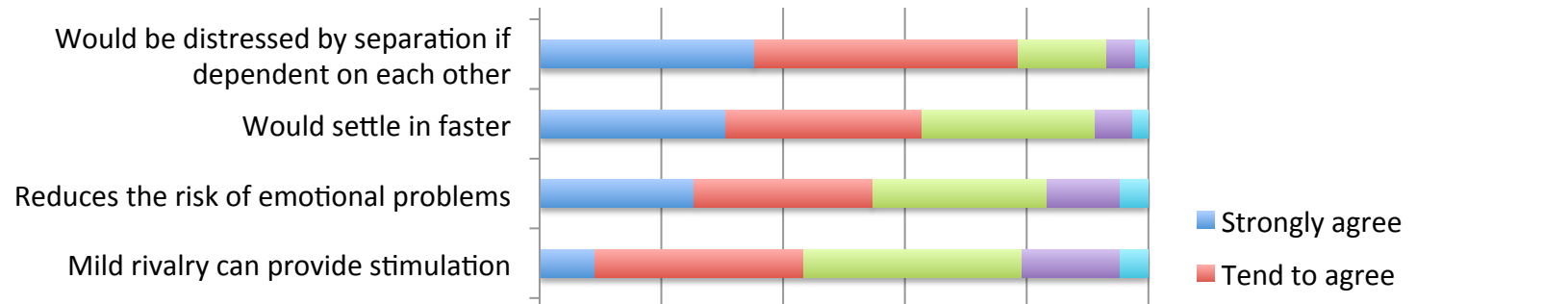
Q45 & Q46. Are your twins still in different classes in the same primary school (OR if over 11, did they stay in different classes throughout primary school)?
(Base: Parents of twins starting school in - or moved into - different classes, n=129)



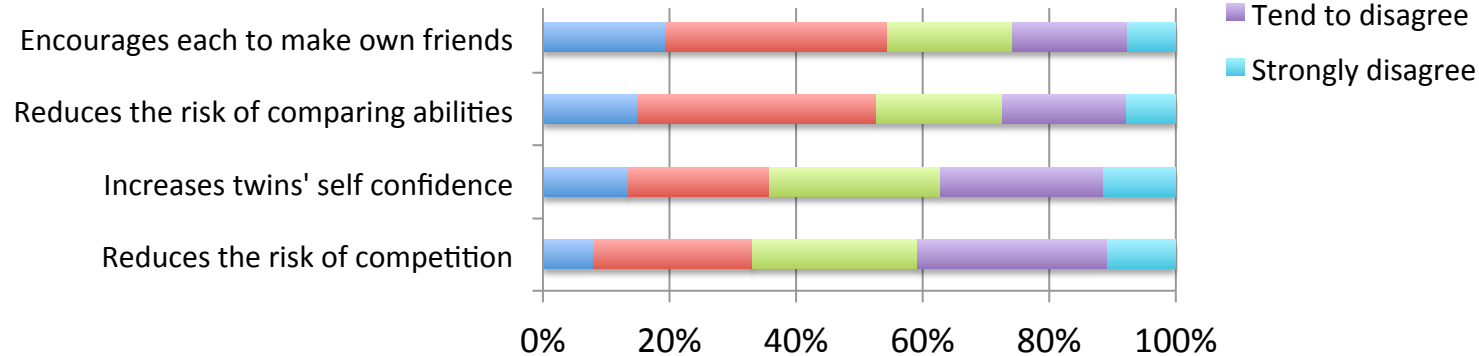
- Once separated, the vast majority of twins (four-fifths) remained in different classes throughout primary school.
- A small minority (12%) of twins were later moved into the same class at primary school for the following reasons (Q46):
 - one or both twin unhappy
 - classes grouped by ability and twins similar
 - parents / twins wanted them together
 - preferred teacher in one of the classes
 - easier for parents
 - only one class per year after reception
- “Other” (9%) included changing schools and twins moved together or spending some years together and some apart.

Q47: Overall, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about twins being separated or kept together? (n=881)

Keeping twins together



Separating twins



The most frequently endorsed reasons for keeping twins together were that separation could cause distress if they were dependent on each other and it would help twins settle in faster.

The most frequently endorsed reasons for separating twins were that it encourages each twin to make their own friends and reduces the risk of comparison of their abilities.

Q48. Finally, if you were able to create a policy regarding the separation of twins in primary school, what would it be and at what age would you suggest the separation of twins to occur, if at all? (n=704)

- Some parents felt twins should be kept together all through primary school and others felt they should be separated immediately from Reception.**
- However, the overriding view of parents was for the school to discuss with the parents what is best for their twins on a case by case basis, with the opportunity to review over time.....**

“NO to policy. Each twin set is different. Consultation and agreement with parents should be a MUST”

“I think it should be decided on a year by year basis with the parents as central to the discussion. No policy can fit as everybody is different!”

“I truly believe there should be an open discussion between the school and the parents regarding the separation of the twins. It shouldn't be down to one person (in general the head teacher) to decide. That sounds highly unfair. As we are being reminded all the time when they are babies that each child is different, each set of twins is different. One rule cannot apply to everyone. I think a meeting should be set up between the school and the parents to discuss and agree on a decision prior to each school year.”

Q49. Is there any further information you would like to add?

- ❑ **Below is a sample of responses that reflect parents' views and recognise the need to educate teachers regarding twin placement and support TAMBA's work in this area**

"My boys are not two yet but I am already apprehensive about the school thing based on what I have heard from other parents. I do not want to have to kick up a fuss when the time comes if the school has a policy I do not agree with."

"Not comparing them and not referring to them as "the twins" but recognising them as two individual children with individual educational skills and needs should be the policy!"

"I was very grateful for the TAMBA research as every year, although consulted, the school tried to persuade us to separate the children. This year going into year 4 they probably will be separated - unfortunately one of them wants to stay together and one wants to separate! We have left it up to school for the first time."

"Many rural schools are unable to separate due to having just one class. Good material should be available to all parents and teachers whether tamba members or not."

"TAMBA should continue to support a parent's right to choose in this area. Carry on educating the teachers please!"