

# How Does Birth Order Affect Self Esteem?

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of my experiment is to learn if there is a connection between birth order and self esteem. It interested me because I am the youngest of 3 girls and always noticed how different my sisters and I were in certain areas and in others ways we were nearly identical.

## **Introduction**

Self esteem is a huge component in our lives that can affect our actions and outlook in the world. There are many variables that can change our self esteem. Self esteem is very important because it can make a difference in success and a person's ability to interact with others. If an individual has a low self esteem, they have a higher chance of having depression (Parvez). There are countless reasons why self esteem is a very important aspect in our lives.

Birth order also plays a huge role in our lives. The number of siblings or age gap between siblings can make a huge difference in self esteem (Sheeza). Birth order can also affect our personalities and success. A study done by Dr. Kidwell shows that the gender of an individual makes a huge difference in self esteem. For example, for boys, having a brother can lower self esteem, but having a sister can have a positive effect on self esteem. This is because the individual's feeling of being special, such as by being the only

child of that gender in the family, enhances self esteem. A large portion of a person's self esteem is shaped in childhood (Sheeza).

There is a very strong connection between birth order and self esteem. Studies show that a person with siblings have a higher self esteem than others. The oldest sibling usually has a much higher self esteem than younger ones (northseattle.edu). A big component in the relationship of self esteem and birth order is the amount of attention from the parents (asapscience, 2015). The age gap can make as big a difference as birth order. A study shows that if there is a two year or less age difference between a teenage boy and his sibling, he is more likely to have a negative self esteem and a negative relationship with his parents (Nystul).

Parents are also play huge role in the child's life, for instance, an older child is more likely to be responsible because of an added amount of pressure from the parents to be that way (asapscience, 2015) in interactions with younger siblings. This is a great example of how expectations and attention from parents can have an impact on personality. Parents are especially focused with the first child, which usually causes the first child to go through life more gingerly.

Birth order and self esteem are connected in many ways, but there are also many other components such as attention/expectations from parents, age gap, gender of siblings, and many more. Self esteem is an important thing to have and maintain because lowered self esteem can affect our mental health as a whole. The relationships with our siblings can also make a difference in who we are in many aspects in our lives. For

example someone with no siblings may have a harder time in new situations where they're not in control, but thrive in situations where they are (asapsience, 2015) .

## **Hypothesis**

Based on the research, I would expect to find that oldest siblings would have the highest self esteem, middle children would lowest self esteem, youngest would fall in the middle and only children would have the slightly higher self esteem than middle children.

## **Experiment:**

### **A. Materials:**

1. Self esteem survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RFZMCZK>)
2. Computer and survey tool
3. At least 100 subjects (in the end I had 206)

### **B. Procedure**

1. Create a survey that determines subjects' birth order and measures self esteem. I adapted the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale ([http://fetzer.org/sites/default/files/images/stories/pdf/selfmeasures/Self\\_Measures\\_for\\_Self-Esteem\\_ROSENBERG\\_SELF-ESTEEM.pdf](http://fetzer.org/sites/default/files/images/stories/pdf/selfmeasures/Self_Measures_for_Self-Esteem_ROSENBERG_SELF-ESTEEM.pdf)). The Rosenberg Scale provided a point system that measures self esteem, which makes it easy to compare categories.

2. Distribute the survey to multiple subjects. I used SurveyMonkey to post the survey online and shared the link via social media.
3. Calculate the average of all the results per birth-order category and compare to find which group has the highest self esteem.
4. Ensure that names of subjects will be kept confidential by not asking for names or contact information.

## Data

Below are the responses to the survey:

Gender

Male	52
Female	150
Other	4

Do you have any siblings?

yes	197
No	9

If Yes, how many?

1	37
2	53
3	42
4	31

5+	30
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Birth order category

youngest	67
middle	65
oldest	62
only	9

I am satisfied with myself

strongly agree	64
agree	102
disagree	24
strongly disagree	3

Sometimes I think I am no good at all

strongly agree	9
agree	56
disagree	78
strongly disagree	50

I have a lot of good qualities

strongly agree	81
agree	108
disagree	5
strongly disagree	0

I am just as able to do things as other people

strongly agree	83
agree	95
disagree	14
strongly disagree	2

I don't have much to be proud of

strongly agree	2
agree	15
disagree	99
strongly disagree	77

I feel useless at times

strongly agree	11
agree	68
disagree	74
strongly disagree	39

I feel that my worth is equal to my peers

strongly agree	66
agree	101
disagree	24
strongly disagree	2

I want to respect myself more than I currently do

strongly agree	22
agree	81
disagree	72
strongly disagree	19

I often think that I'm a failure

strongly agree	11
agree	39
disagree	94
strongly disagree	50

I have a positive attitude toward myself

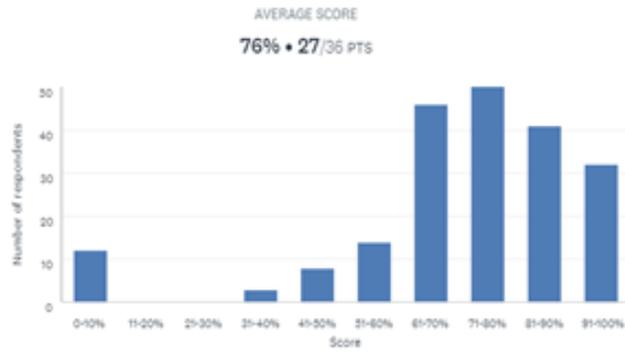
strongly agree	55
agree	103
disagree	30
strongly disagree	6

### **How did the age groups compare?**

Below are charts tracking each birth order category and their answers to the self esteem questions. The higher the percentage shown, the higher the self esteem. (Scoring comes from the Rosenberg Scale.)

## Oldest:

### Quiz Summary

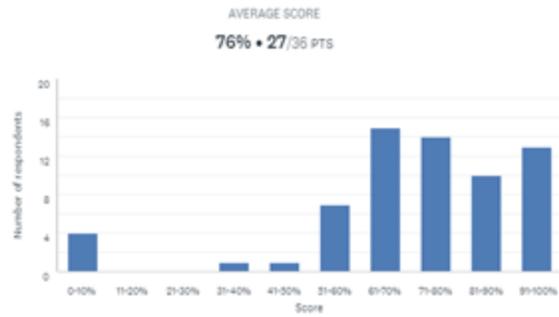


#### STATISTICS

Lowest Score	Median	Highest Score
39%	76%	100%
Mean: 76%		
Standard Deviation: 14%		

## Middle:

### Quiz Summary



#### STATISTICS

Lowest Score	Median	Highest Score
39%	75%	100%
Mean: 76%		
Standard Deviation: 14%		

## Youngest:



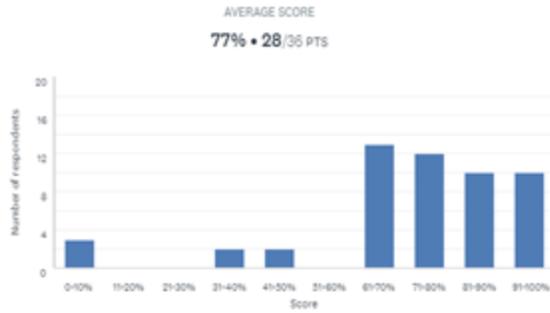
**only child:**



**How did the genders compare?**

Below are charts tracking each gender and their answers to the self esteem questions. The higher the percentage shown, the higher the self esteem. (Scoring comes from the Rosenberg Scale.)

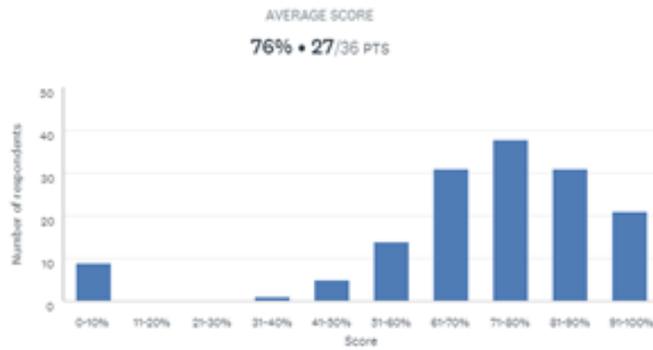
## Male Only



### STATISTICS

Lowest Score	Median	Highest Score
39%	78%	100%
Mean: 77%		
Standard Deviation: 15%		

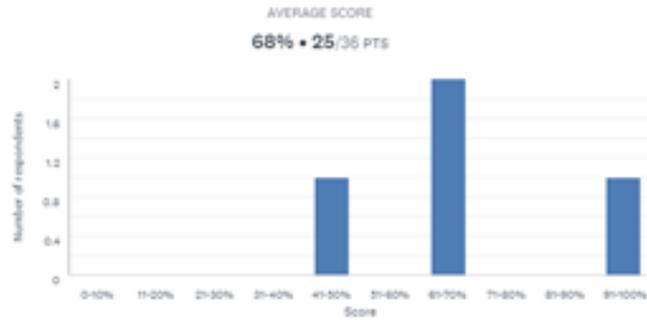
## Female only



### STATISTICS

Lowest Score	Median	Highest Score
39%	75%	100%
Mean: 76%		
Standard Deviation: 14%		

## Other



STATISTICS		
Lowest Score	Median	Highest Score
50%	64%	94%
Mean: 60%		
Standard Deviation: 19%		

## Analysis/Discussion

For my experiment, I made a survey with SurveyMonkey containing the questions above and posted it on social media for people to take. I had 206 people respond. Most had siblings but there was even distribution of oldest, middle and youngest.

I found that there was not a distinct difference between the different birth order categories. The oldest and only had a average score of 28. The middle and youngest had an average score of 27.

The percentages are nearly the same with only child being 77% and the other birth order categories being 76% with a standard deviation between 14-18%.

I was surprised to see so little difference so I also looked at gender differences and found the same. The average score was 28 for males, 27 for females and 25 for other. (Although other was a very small sample. Too small to be significant.)

I wonder why my results do not match my hypothesis. I looked at other possible variable - like number of siblings. But the results were the same. I'm not sure if the results indicate that self esteem or if there were flaws in the survey, an example of this is how

some people may have based their answers on how they could seem like they have a higher self esteem instead of how they actually feel, because the questions were somewhat obvious in the way that you would be able to tell which answers were the “right” answers.

A problem I had with the accuracy of this survey is that many people skipped questions, as a result, the results aren't as accurate for the average of the results. If I were to do this experiment again I would try to make it clear to the user to answer every question.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I found that the only child category has the highest self esteem with an average score of 77%. I think this is because they don't have competition with any siblings to be the best and aren't being compared to anyone, they also have complete attention from their parents which can cause them to thrive in life from the undivided support that they receive. this information is important because it helps parents understand how their children feel and can help people with sibling further understand the pressure and hardships their siblings go through.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my science teacher, Mrs. Silberhorn, for giving me the idea to use a survey and for helping me by answering my thousands of questions and encouraging me. I would also like to thank my mom, Ann Treacy, for proof reading all of my typos, organizing my graphs, helping me come up with my actual question, and working with me to get people to actually take my survey, I wouldn't of been able to do it without her.

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