**Birth order and your career**

**Debra Auerbach, CareerBuilder Writer**



The influence of birth order on personality, intelligence and achievements has long been debated. Austrian psychiatrist Alfred Adler, born in 1870, is said to be one of the first to link birth order to one's personality and direction in life. His research spurred a plethora of other studies, some with overlapping conclusions and others that contradict.

My personal experience as the youngest in a family of three girls matches up with what much of the research says about lastborns. As the baby of the family, my parents were a lot more lenient with me. I tended to get my way, often to the chagrin of my older sisters. I suppose some of that could have been attributed to my knack for whining incessantly until my parents would just give up, but I digress.

According to several studies, I was actually at a bit of a disadvantage as the youngest born, and my oldest sister pretty much had it made. If you're the first born, you generally have an advantage and are often more educated and successful than your latter-born siblings. A study by a group of Norwegian researchers concluded that first- born children have on average a three-point higher IQ than non-firstborns.

Birth order can also impact what career path you take and how successful, at least monetarily, you'll be. A new [CareerBuilder study](http://cb.com/r38vHK) examined how workers compare in terms of chosen profession, title and salary based on birth order and sibling status. According to the survey, my youngest-in-the-family status means I tend to prefer creative roles and navigate toward [editing/writing](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/editing/) jobs.

**First born**  
*Personality:* First-born children have the advantage of being the only child for a certain period of time; thus, they get their parents' full attention. They are reliable, conscientious and strive to achieve. According to Katherine Crowley, a Harvard trained psychotherapist specializing in workplace issues firstborns like to know what the rules are, and once their younger brothers or sisters arrive, they like to take charge.

*Career:* The CareerBuilder study found that first-born children are the most likely to earn six figures and hold a C-level position (e.g., CEO, CFO and Senior VP). Firstborns tend to gravitate toward jobs in [government](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/government/), [information technology](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/information+technology/), [engineering](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/engineering/) and [science](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/science/).

**Middle or second child**  
*Personality:* "Secondborns arrive and someone is already in the forefront -- a sibling," says Crowley. "Their development includes noticing what the first born is doing and trying to carve out their own territory." They tend to be people pleasers, and their middle-of-the-sibling-pack status means they're often pros at negotiation and mediation.

*Career:* At work, they generally make good team players, facilitators and researchers, notes the CareerBuilder study. A middle child is the most likely to report holding an [entry-level](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/entry+level/) position and earning less than $35,000. Middle children lean toward [public service](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/public+service/) and [caretaking](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/caretaker/) roles, including [law enforcement](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/law+enforcement/), [fire-fighting](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/firefighter/), [construction](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/construction/), [education](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/education/) and [personal care](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/personal+care/).

**Last born**  
*Personality:* Lastborns often get the short end of the stick when it comes to recognition of their achievements, since their parents have less time to spend doting on them. But since they are the last ones to arrive, they are the "babies," and they can leverage that status to get their own way. Crowley notes these children are the free spirits, entertainers and creative minds of the family.

*Career:* Career-wise, the last-born child is the most likely to work in middle management and prefer more creative roles and technology. Crowley notes that lastborns succeed in middle management roles because they are good at both managing up and managing down. Common job types include [art/design/architecture](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/art/), [editing/writing](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/writing/), [information technology](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/information+technology/) and [sales](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/sales/).

**Only child**  
*Personality:* According to the Child Development Institute, only children tend to be spoiled and self-centered, since they have no siblings to compete with. They are often mature for their age, likely due to the large amount of solo time they spend with their parents.

*Career:* An only child has a higher tendency toward working in technical and health-related fields and protective services. An only child is also more likely to earn six figures and hold a C-level position. However, they are less likely to be satisfied in their jobs than workers with brothers and sisters. Only children tend to pursue careers in [information technology](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/information+technology/), [engineering](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/engineering/), [nursing](http://msn.careerbuilder.com/jobs/keyword/nursing/) and law enforcement.

Of course, there are always exceptions to these theories. And while much can be said about birth order and its impact, there are a variety of other factors that make people who they are and influence what they become.

Last Updated: 14/10/2011

<http://www.careerbuilder.com/Article/CB-2614-Job-Info-Trends-Birth-order-and-your-career/>