Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Baby names in England and Wales: 2018

Most popular first names for baby boys and girls in 2018 using birth registration data.

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1 . Main points

- Oliver remained the most popular name for boys in England and Wales for the sixth year in a row, while Olivia remained the most popular name for girls for the third year in a row.

- Arthur was the only new entry into the top 10 names for boys in 2018, replacing Jacob, while Sophia and Grace replaced Poppy and Lily in the top 10 names for girls.

- Grayson, Jasper, Rowan, Tobias, Sonny and Dominic entered the top 100 names for boys in 2018; Grayson, Rowan and Tobias have previously never featured in the top 100.

- Ada, Delilah, Ayla, Zoe, Margot and Felicity entered the top 100 names for girls in 2018; Ada returned to the top 100 for the first time since 1924 while Delilah, Ayla and Margot made their first ever appearances.

- Less than half (45%) of babies had a name within the top 100 lists in 2018, down from two thirds (67%) in 1996.

- Mothers aged 35 years and over tended to prefer more "traditional" names, compared with mothers aged under 25 years who were more likely to choose more "non-traditional", shortened or hyphenated names.

- Regionally, Olivia was the most popular name for girls throughout England and Wales, while Oliver was outranked by Muhammad in four of the nine English regions, and by Harry in the North East.

- Oliver was the most popular name for boys in 25% of local authorities, while Olivia was the most popular name for girls in nearly twice as many (46%) local authorities.

2 . Statistician's comment

"Oliver and Olivia remained the most popular baby names in 2018, although there are the first signs that Oliver's six-year reign as the number one name for boys is under threat. Arthur surged into the top 10 boys' names for the first time since the 1920s, and Ada jumped into the girls' top 100 for the first time in a century too, both perhaps inspired by characters in the BBC TV drama Peaky Blinders.

On the flipside, the growth in the use of technology assistants in our homes may help to explain why the number of baby girls named Alexa has more than halved compared with 2017. Communicating with young children can be hard enough at the best of times."

Nick Stripe, Vital Statistics Outputs Branch, Office for National Statistics.

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3 . Things you need to know about this release

Important information for interpreting these baby name statistics:

- baby name statistics are compiled from first names recorded when live births are registered in England and Wales as part of civil registration, a legal requirement

- the statistics are based only on live births that occurred in the calendar year, as there is no public register of stillbirths

- babies born in England and Wales to women whose usual residence is outside England and Wales are included in the statistics for England and Wales as a whole, but excluded from any subdivision of England and Wales

- the statistics are based on the exact spelling of the name given on the birth certificate; grouping names with similar pronunciation would change the rankings and exact names are given so users can group if they wish

4 . Oliver and Olivia remained the most popular baby names in 2018

Oliver and Olivia remained the most popular baby names in 2018. Oliver has been the most popular name for boys for the past six years and it is the third year running that Olivia has been the most popular name for girls.

Arthur was the only new entry in the top 10 names for boys in 2018. There were 30% more baby Arthurs named in 2018 compared to 2017, with the name climbing 12 places to seventh place, replacing Jacob in the top 10. The name Arthur has not been in the top 10 names in England and Wales since 1924.

Sophia and Grace entered the top 10 names for girls replacing Poppy and Lily. This is the first time Sophia has ever been in the top 10 in England and Wales while Grace was the most popular name for girls in 2006.

There were six new entries in the top 100 names for boys in England and Wales in 2018: Grayson, Jasper, Rowan, Tobias, Sonny and Dominic replaced Austin, Ibrahim, Lewis, Nathan and Tyler. This is the first time Grayson, Rowan and Tobias have featured in the top 100 (Figure 1).

Meanwhile, Ada, Delilah, Ayla, Zoe, Margot and Felicity entered the top 100 names for girls in 2018 for England and Wales. They replaced Darcey, Darcy, Julia, Leah, Megan and Victoria. Ada has returned to the top 100 for the first time since 1924 while this is the first time Delilah, Ayla and Margot have entered the top 100. Until 2018, Megan and Leah had been in the top 100 names for girls since 1994 and 1984 respectively (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The top 100 baby names for boys and girls have changed over time

England and Wales, 1904 to 2018

Download data

Top 100 boys' and girls' names for 2018 are also available for England and for Wales separately in our datasets.

5 . The proportion of babies with a name ranking in the top 100 continued decreasing in 2018

In 2018, there were 657,076 live births in England and Wales. Of these live births, there were 62,729 different names registered in 2018.

Table 1: Live births and the number of different baby names registered in 2018
England and Wales

	Boys	Girls
Number of live births	337,584	319,492
Number of different baby names registered	27,946	34,783
Number of babies with a name in the top 100	167,955 (50%)	128,947 (40%)
Number of babies with a name in the top 10	40,653 (12%)	29,201 (9%)
Number of babies with a name that occurred once in 2018	18,732 (6%)	23,635 (7%)
Number of babies with a name that occurred twice in 2018	6,194 (2%)	7,584 (2%)
Number of babies with a name that occurred three or more times in 2018	312,643 (93%)	288,270 (90%)
Number of births registered without a name	15	3

Source: Office for National Statistics - Baby names in England and Wales

Notes

1. The full baby name datasets only include names with counts of three or more to protect the confidentiality of uncommon baby names.

2. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Since 1996, the percentage of babies given a name in the top 10, top 25, top 50 and top 100 has decreased (Figure 2) and the list of names has become more diverse. In 1996, two-thirds (66.7%) of babies had a name within the top 100, while in 2018 this was true for less than half of babies (45.2%).
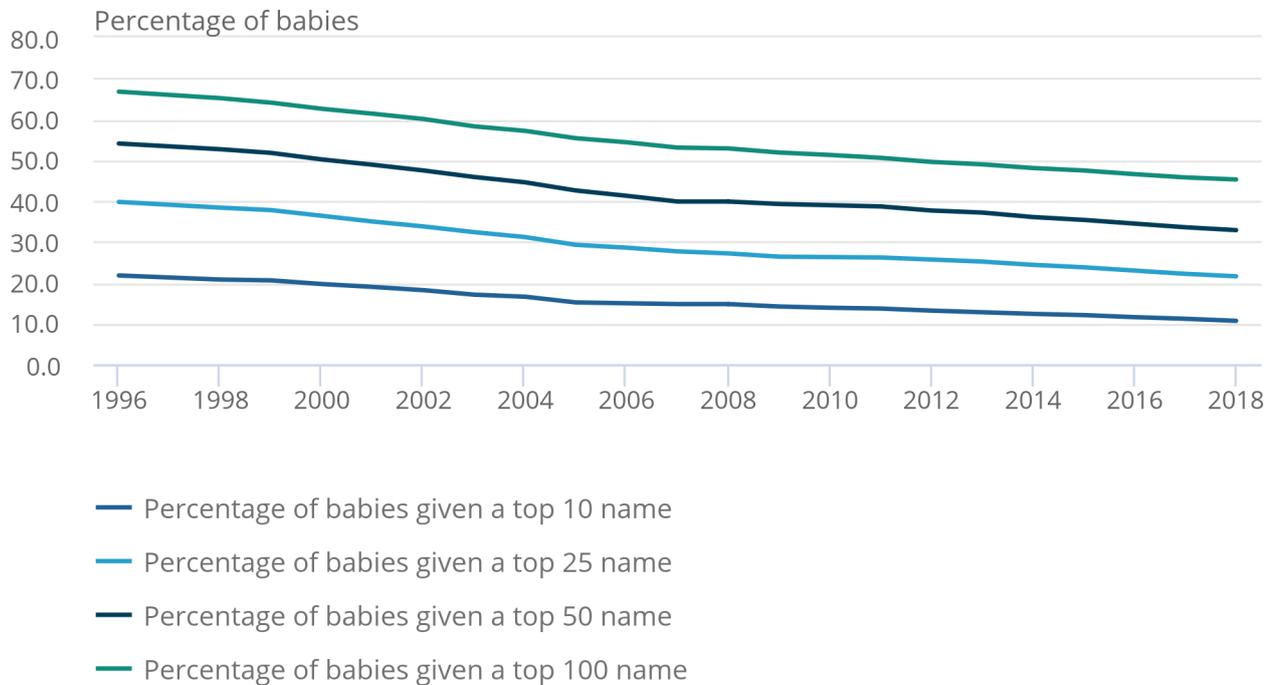
This long-term increase in the diversification of names given to babies may be because of a number of changes in our culture and society. Factors likely to be influencing these changes include: the decline in Christianity and church attendance; the growing influence of popular and celebrity culture; a desire for originality and individuality as much as conformity; and a growth in the number of babies born in England and Wales to non-UK born parents.

England and Wales, 1996 to 2018

Figure 2: The percentage of babies given a name in the top 100 has decreased every year since 1996

England and Wales, 1996 to 2018

Percentage of babies

- Percentage of babies given a top 10 name
- Percentage of babies given a top 25 name
- Percentage of babies given a top 50 name
- Percentage of babies given a top 100 name

Source: Office for National Statistics - Baby names in England and Wales

6 . How have popular baby names changed over time?

While a handful of names, such as George, William, Edward and Elizabeth have consistently featured in the top 100 since the early 20th century, most fluctuate in popularity over time. Names which were popular in the 1940s and 1950s tend to feature much lower in the 2018 rankings, while some names which ranked highly in the early 1900s are starting to increase in popularity again.

Compared with 2008, only Oliver, Harry, Jack and Charlie have remained in the top ten names for boys. None of the 2018 top 10 names for boys featured in the top 10 between 1944 and 1984.

Many boys names that were in the top 20 in the mid-20th century have dramatically fallen down the rankings. Kenneth, Roger, Keith, Terence and Barry were all in the top 20 names for boys in 1944 but none are in the top 1,000 in 2018.

Olivia, Amelia, Emily and Grace were the only names to feature in both the 2008 and 2018 top 10 names for girls. None of the top 10 names for girls in 2018 appeared in the top 10 before 1994. However, names such as Florence and Ivy that were popular in the early 1900s, but left the top 100 names for decades, are now back inside the top 20 names for girls in 2018.

As with names for boys, most names for girls that were popular in the mid-20th century have fallen out of favour with new parents. The names Christine, Jean, Ann, Susan, Janet, Maureen, Carol, Pauline, Joan and Pamela were all in the top 20 in 1944, but none are in the top 1,000 names for girls in 2018.

We cannot say for sure why this is happening. However, new parents may associate names which were popular in the 40s and 50s with their own parents or grandparents, and therefore be less inclined to choose them. In contrast, it is unlikely that new parents of today will have living memories of those born in the early 1900s, which may contribute to the revival in popularity of these names.

While some names for girls are making a return, other names that were popular at the start of the 1900s are now considerably less popular. In 2018, there were fewer than three girls named Gladys, or Marjorie – names that had been in the top 20 in the early decades of the 1900s. However, these names were still in the top 100 in the 1930s and 1940s respectively, which means they are still likely to be within living memory.

7 . Choices of baby names vary by age of mother

There are apparent age differences in name selection between older and younger mothers. More "traditional" names such as Alexander, Joshua, William, Thomas, Charlotte, Jessica and Sophie tend to be more popular among older mothers, especially those aged over 35 years. Whereas some of the more popular names chosen by mothers aged under 25 years are "non-traditional" names such as Hunter, Logan, Harper and Nevaeh (Figure 3 and 4).

Figure 3: More traditional names were more popular among mothers aged 35 years and over

Top 10 baby names for girls, by age of mother in years, England and Wales, 2018

Shortened names for boys such as Archie, Alfie and Freddie were all in the top 10 for mothers aged under 25 years but were less popular among mothers aged over 35 years. Whereas the full spellings, such as Alfred and Frederick were more popular with older mothers.

Figure 4: Shortened names were more popular among mothers aged under 25 years

Top 10 baby names for boys, by age of mother in years, England and Wales, 2018

Hyphenated names also appeared to be a more popular choice among younger mothers. Mothers aged under 25 years were the only age group where hyphenated names for girls featured in the top 100. Amelia-Rose was ranked 83rd among mothers aged under 25 years and Ava-Rose was ranked 88th, but both names were outside of the top 200 in all other age groups.

8 . Does popular culture influence our choice of baby names?

Baby names can be inspired by modern culture. Exposure to the names of popular celebrities and their children, or from television and film, may increase their popularity. For example, the number of Margots has more than doubled since 2015 resulting in the name entering the 2018 top 100 names for girls for the first time. The name Margot could have been inspired by the famous Hollywood actress Margot Robbie and the character Margo in the Despicable Me film franchise.

Since the birth of David and Victoria Beckham's daughter, Harper in 2011, the number of girls named Harper has increased, rising 831 places to be ranked the 27th most popular name for girls in 2018.

By contrast, the number of baby girls named Alexa has remained relatively stable for a number of years but decreased in 2018. The increased use of technology assistants within the home in recent years may help explain why the number of baby girls named Alexa more than halved compared with 2017.

Names which were popular in the early 1900s, such as Ada and Arthur, have also risen in popularity. The television show Peaky Blinders, which has become increasingly popular in recent years, features characters with these names.

The name Ada climbed 49 places to become the 65th most popular name in 2018. Meanwhile, Arthur has been rising in the ranks of the top 100 names for boys since 2009 and became the seventh most popular name for boys in 2018. While still ranking outside the top 100 (255), the name Cillian has also been gradually increasing in popularity, rising 295 places in the last five years. This could be inspired by the Peaky Blinders actor Cillian Murphy.

9 . Baby names vary by mother's usual area of residence

There were some regional differences in the top names for boys by mother's usual area of residence in 2018. Oliver was the most popular name for boys in England and Wales as a whole but was not in the North West, Yorkshire and The Humber, West Midlands and London (where Muhammad was the most popular name for boys), or in the North East (where Harry was the most popular name for boys).

In 2018, Oliver was the most popular name for boys in 24.8% of local authorities in England and Wales. There were 28 other names for boys ranked first in different local authorities, and 21.2% of local authorities had a highest ranked name that did not feature in the England and Wales top 10 names for boys.

The highest proportion of boys given the same name in any given area was in Pendle where 10.3% of boys born were named Muhammad in 2018 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Explore the top 100 names for boys by local authority

England and Wales, 2018

Source: Office for National Statistics - Baby names in England and Wales

[Download data](#)

For girls, Olivia was the most popular name in England and Wales in 2018 and this pattern was replicated across all the English regions and in Wales.

Olivia was also the most popular name for girls in 44.5% of local authorities. However, there were 39 other names for girls ranked first in different local authorities and not all the highest ranked names in each local authority featured in the top 10 names for girls in England and Wales (24.5% of local authorities).

The concentration of girls given the same name in any given area was lower compared with boys in 2018. Craven had the highest proportion of girls given the same name where 3.8% of girls born in the local authority were named Olivia (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Explore the top 100 names for girls by local authority

England and Wales, 2018

Source: Office for National Statistics - Baby names in England and Wales

Download data

10 . Links to related statistics

More detailed data for 2018 baby names by country, region and month for England and Wales are available alongside data for 1996 to 2017.

Historical rankings of baby names for 1904 to 1994 (top 100 rankings at 10-year intervals) were provided by the General Register Office. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) took responsibility for producing baby name statistics in 2009 and does not have the data to compile figures prior to 1996. This represents all the historical data available; we are unable to provide counts for years prior to 1996.

The baby names comparison tool has been developed by Anna Powell-Smith (a web developer external to ONS) using our data. Because the tool has been produced external to ONS, it will not contain 2018 data until sometime after 9:30am on Thursday 29 August 2019; we cannot provide 2018 data to Anna Powell-Smith until the release is published.

Special extracts and tabulations of baby names data for England and Wales are available to order (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and the ONS charging policy, where appropriate). Enquiries should be made to Vital Statistics Outputs Branch by email to vsob@ons.gov.uk or telephone on +44 (0)1329 444110. User requested data will be published.

11 . Quality and methodology

This is the first time that annual statistics on baby names in England and Wales for 2018 have been published. Baby name statistics are derived from final annual birth registration data and represent all live births occurring in England and Wales in the specific calendar year but include a very small number of late registrations.

Minimal automated editing is conducted on the names. For 2018 data onwards, a slightly different cleaning method was introduced, where all spaces are removed from hyphenated names, to ensure they are treated as one name. For example, Amelia - Lily would now be processed as Amelia-Lily instead of Amelia. More details on the edits applied, and the impact of this change is available in our Baby names quality and methodology information.

Baby name statistics for England and its regions and for Wales are based on the area of usual residence of the mother, rather than where the baby was born.

Births where the name of the baby was not stated were excluded from all the rankings. Births where the usual residence of the mother was not in England and Wales or not stated were excluded from the regional rankings and from the separate England and Wales rankings.

The primary users of the data are parents and soon-to-be parents, register offices who display the data and the media. Baby name websites and those who manufacture and sell named items such as souvenir mugs also make use of the data.

The Baby names Quality and Methodology Information and the Births Quality and Methodology Information contain important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data

- uses and users

- how the output was created

- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data

Our User guide to birth statistics provides further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to births and includes a glossary of terms.

The Revisions policy for population statistics (including baby name statistics) is available.

Baby names with a count of two or fewer in England and Wales are not included within published datasets to protect the confidentiality of individuals.