Statistical bulletin

Baby names in England and Wales: 2021

Most popular first names for baby boys and girls in 2021 using birth registration data.

Contact:
Child and Lifetime Health Monitoring team
health.data@ons.gov.uk
+44 1329 444110

Release date:
5 October 2022

Next release:
August to September 2023 (provisional)

Notice

17 May 2024

We have changed the way these statistics are published. We will continue to publish updated data for this release in our Baby names in England and Wales datasets but this accompanying bulletin has been discontinued. This decision was made as a part of a wider ONS prioritisation exercise. We will review this approach for future releases of the data. For the latest information on this release, please see our media statement about baby names in England and Wales 2022.

Contact Health.Data@ons.gov.uk with any questions or feedback on this change.

23 September 2026

This bulletin has been discontinued. We will continue to publish updated data in our Baby names for girls in England and Wales and Baby names for boys in England and Wales datasets. This decision was made as part of our prioritisation strategy and is under constant review. For the latest top 100 baby names, please see our interactive Baby Names Explorer Tool.

If you have any questions or feedback on this change, contact us at Health.Data@ons.gov.uk.

Table of contents

1. Main points

2. Top baby names

3. Baby names by age of mother

4. Baby names by mother’s usual area of residence

5. Baby names and popular culture

6. Baby names data

7. Glossary

8. Measuring the data

9. Strengths and limitations

10. Related links

11. Cite this statistical bulletin

1 . Main points

- Noah was the most popular boys' name in England and Wales in 2021, replacing Oliver from the previous year, while Olivia remained the top name for girls for the sixth year in a row.
- Henry replaced Jack in the top 10 names for boys, while Freya, Florence and Willow replaced Isabella, Rosie, and Sophia for girls; this is the first time Jack has not been in the top 10 since our annual series began in 1996.
- Mothers aged over 35 years continued to be more likely to have babies with more traditional names such as Thomas, while younger mothers' babies were more likely to have shortened versions, such as Tommy.
- Muhammad was the most popular boys' name in four out of nine English regions, while Olivia was the top girls' name for every English region and Wales, except for the East Midlands where Amelia was the most popular girls name.
- New entries this year to the top 100 include Lara, Beatrice and Sara for girls and Blake, Brody, Kai, Rupert, Tobias and Nathan for boys; this is the first time that Rupert and Brody have been in the top 100.
- Baby names of Welsh origin featured among the most popular in Wales in 2021; Alys, Ffion, Seren and Eira were among the top 50 for girls and Arthur, Osian, Dylan and Elis were among the top 30 for boys.

Statistician comment

"Noah has replaced Oliver as the most popular name for boys in 2021, moving Oliver into second place and ending an eight-year reign at the top. Olivia remained the most popular girls name in 2021, having held the top spot since 2016. Interestingly, Noah was not top in any of the English regions, but has risen up the ranks in most regions since last year to take first place overall.

While Noah and Olivia are enjoying their places at the top, some names could be in danger of falling out of favour. Leslie has had relatively little popularity in recent years with fewer than seven boys named each year since 2018. Others such as Clifford, Nigel and Norman have not fared much better with ten or fewer boys being named. Girls' names such as Glenda and Kerry, that were more common before, are also becoming endangered and we have seen less than five girls being named each year since 2018.

Popular culture continues to influence parents' baby name choices. Today we have also published analysis exploring cultural influences that could be inspiring baby name trends, from hit TV shows to musical icons."

James Tucker, Head of Health and Life Events Analysis, Office for National Statistics

Follow us on Twitter @ONSJames

2 . Top baby names

Noah and Olivia were the most popular baby names in England and Wales in 2021 (Table 1). Noah has replaced Oliver as the top boys' name, forcing Oliver into second place after eight consecutive years at the top. Noah was the 4th most popular boys name in 2020 and has risen 15 places in the past ten years since 2011. Olivia has now been the most popular girls' name for six consecutive years.

Henry has replaced Jack in the top 10 names for boys and this is the first time Jack has not been in the top 10 since 1996. Freya, Florence and Willow replaced Isabella, Rosie and Sophia in the top 10 names for girls. This is the first time Florence and Willow have been in the top 10 since 1996.

Table 1: Top 10 baby names for boys and girls, England and Wales, 2021

Rank	Boys name	Count	Change in rank since 2020	Girls name	Count	Change in rank since 2020
1	Noah	4,525	3	Olivia	3,649	0
2	Oliver	4,167	-1	Amelia	3,164	0
3	George	4,141	-1	Isla	2,683	0
4	Arthur	3,766	-1	Ava	2,576	0
5	Muhammad	3,722	0	Ivy	2,245	1
6	Leo	3,465	0	Freya	2,187	6
7	Harry	3,089	1	Lily	2,182	0
8	Oscar	3,071	-1	Florence	2,180	6
9	Archie	2,928	0	Mia	2,168	-4
10	Henry	2,912	1	Willow	2,067	2

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

In 2021 the largest movers in the top 100 names in England and Wales were, Brody (90th) for boys, and Olive (74th) for girls, rising 36 and 25 places respectively, since 2020.

New entries this year to the top 100 include Lara, Beatrice, and Sara for girls and Blake, Brody, Kai, Rupert, Tobias, and Nathan for boys (Figure 1). This is the first time that Rupert and Brody have been in the top 100.

Figure 1: The top 100 baby boys’ and girls’ names for 2021, have varied in popularity over time

Baby name ranks, England and Wales, 1996 to 2021

Notes:

1. Ranks of 1,000 or more are included in the chart for presentational purposes.

Download the data

.xlsx

3 . Baby names by age of mother

The long running trend of older mothers giving their babies more traditional names, and younger mothers giving more modern and shortened versions of traditional names continued.

In 2021, half of the top 10 boys' names for mothers aged under 25 years were shortened versions of traditional names. On the other hand, of the top 10 baby names for mothers aged 35 years and over, only one was a shortened name.

Elijah and Arlo only appeared in the top 10 boys' names for mothers aged under 25 years. More traditional names such as Alexander and Thomas only featured in the top 10 boys' names for mothers aged over 35 years (Figure 2b). Similarly, Willow, Isabella, Harper, and Delilah were girls' names only seen in the top 10 for mothers aged under 25, whereas baby names such as Charlotte, Grace, Sophie, and Sophia were more likely for mothers aged over 35 years and over (Figure 2a).

Figure 2a: Babies of mothers aged 35 years and over have more traditional girls’ names

Top 10 baby names for girls by mothers’ age in years, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Figures reflect baby names that ranked in the top 10 for at least one age-group. The corresponding rank for each of the other age-groups has been included for comparison purposes (not to scale).
2. A full list of the top 100 names per age-group are available in table 8 of our dataset.

Download the data

.xlsx

Figure 2b: Babies of mothers aged under 25 years are more likely to have shortened versions of traditional boys’ names

Top 10 baby names for boys by mothers’ age in years, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Figures reflect baby names that ranked in the top 10 for at least one age-group. The corresponding rank for each of the other age-groups has been included for comparison purposes (not to scale).
2. A full list of the top 100 names per age-group are available in table 8 of our dataset.

Download the data

.xlsx

4 . Baby names by mother’s usual area of residence

Although Noah was the most popular boys' name in England and Wales overall in 2021, this was not the case regionally. Across England's nine regions, Muhammad was the most popular boys' name in four regions, George was the most popular in three, and Arthur and Oliver were the most popular in one region each.

In 2021, one-fifth (19.9%) of local authorities had at least one top boys' name that was not in the top 10 for England and Wales.

Figure 3: Explore the top 100 boys’ names by local authority

Number and percentage of baby boys’ names by local authority, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Figures are based on mothers’ usual area of residence.

Download the data

.xlsx

For girls, Olivia was the most popular name in Wales, as well as in every English region expect for the East Midlands, where Amelia ranked top.

Across all local authorities, one-third (33.5%) of areas had at least one top girls' name that was not in the top 10 in England and Wales.

Figure 4: Explore the top 100 girls’ names by local authority

Number and percentage of baby girls’ names by local authority, England and Wales, 2021

Notes:

1. Figures are based on mothers’ usual area of residence.

Download the data

.xlsx

5 . Baby names and popular culture

Today, we have also published analysis which explores how popular culture may be influencing baby name choices in England and Wales.

6 . Baby names data

Baby names for girls in England and Wales
Dataset | Released 5 October 2022
Rank and count of the top names for baby girls, changes in rank since the previous year and breakdown by country, region and month of birth.

Baby names for boys in England and Wales
Dataset | Released 5 October 2022
Rank and count of the top names for baby boys, changes in rank since the previous year and breakdown by country, region and month of birth.

Baby names in England and Wales: from 1996
Dataset | Release 5 October 2022
Rank and count of baby names for boys and girls in England and Wales, 1996 to 2021.

7 . Glossary

Live birth

A live birth is a baby showing signs of life at birth.

Stillbirth

A stillbirth is a baby born after 24 or more weeks' completed gestation and that did not, at any time, breathe or show signs of life.

8 . Measuring the data

Birth statistics represent births that occur and are then registered in England and Wales. Figures are derived from information recorded when live births and stillbirths are registered as part of civil registration, a legal requirement. These data represent the most complete data source available.

The registration of births is a service carried out by the Local Registration Service in partnership with the General Register Office (GRO) in England and Wales.

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. Statistics are based only on live births, as there is no public register of stillbirths.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the Baby names QMI.

To get a complete statistical picture for our baby names analysis, we use mother's data because information relating to mothers should appear on every birth registration. More information is available on the birth registration process. We release further births data relating to both parents characteristics in our Birth Characteristics release.

Coronavirus and birth statistics

Delays in birth registrations because of the coronavirus pandemic affected 2020 and 2021 data. In normal circumstances, births should be registered within 42 days and our annual data extract only includes births registered before 25 February.

Birth registration services in England and Wales were temporarily suspended in March 2020. From June 2020 registration services restarted where it was safe to do so. In 2020, 42% of registrations came in after 42 days (the usual legal limit) and in 2021, 26% came in after 42 days. Therefore, we decided to include all births registered up to 12 August 2021 in the 2020 dataset and all births up to 15 May 2022 in the 2021 dataset, to ensure that our birth statistics are as complete as possible and comparable with previous years. For more information, please see our Births in England and Wales explained: 2020 article and our User guide to birth statistics methodology.

9 . Strengths and limitations

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

National Statistics status for Births in England and Wales

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standard of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

You can view our most recent full assessment with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics which was completed in September 2011.

Improvements since last review include:

- revisions to the way statistics are produced are explained in the user guide, detailing the year the change took place and reason why
- in cases where corrections were implemented, they were accompanied by explanations of the change and the reasons why

where applicable, we added additional background information into our user guide and QMI to inform the user of the differences in methods between the UK countries and the reasons underlying these differences

10 . Related links

Births in England and Wales: 2021
Bulletin | Released 9 August 2022
Live births, stillbirths and the intensity of childbearing, measured by the total fertility rate.

Births by parent's country of birth, England and Wales: 2020
Bulletin | Released 14 October 2021
Annual statistics on live births including countries of birth for non-UK-born mothers and fathers.

Birth characteristics in England and Wales: 2020
Bulletin | Released 13 January 2022
Annual live births by sex, ethnicity and month, maternities by place of birth and with multiple births, and stillbirths by age of parents and calendar quarter.

Baby names comparison tool by Anna Powell-Smith using our data
Web page | Updated as new data become available
Baby name trends in England and Wales from 1996 to 2021.

Top 100 baby names in England and Wales: historical data
Dataset | Released 15 August 2014
Historical lists of the top 100 names for baby boys and girls for 1904 to 1994 at 10-yearly intervals.

Baby name statistics for Scotland
Web page | Updated as new data become available
National Records of Scotland's (NRS's) statistics on baby names.

Baby name statistics for Northern Ireland
Web page | Updated as new data become available
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's (NISRA's) statistics on baby names.

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 5 October 2022, ONS website, statistical bulletin, Baby names in England and Wales: 2021