

Statistical bulletin

Baby names in England and Wales: 2012

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



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1 . Key findings

- Harry and Amelia were the most popular first names given to babies born in England and Wales in 2012, maintaining the top spots from 2011
- Riley replaced Joshua in the top 10 most popular names for baby boys, climbing 5 places from number 13 to number 8
- Mia and Isla replaced Ruby and Grace in the top 10 most popular names for baby girls, climbing 6 and 7 places from numbers 13 and 15 to numbers 7 and 8 respectively
- In England, Amelia was the most popular name in all regions and Harry was the most popular name in seven out of nine regions
- In Wales, Jacob was the most popular name for baby boys, replacing Oliver, while Amelia replaced Lily as the most popular name for baby girls

2 . Summary

This bulletin presents the most popular first names for babies born in England and Wales in 2012. In particular, it examines the 100 most popular first names for boys and for girls and compares the ranks of those names with the ranks in 2011 and 2002. It examines the difference in ranks between England and Wales and the regions, along with the seasonality of names.

Baby name statistics have been derived from final annual births registration data and include all live births occurring in England and Wales in 2012.

This is the first time that 2012 annual statistics on baby names in England and Wales have been published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

3 . Top 10 baby names in England and Wales, 2012

The top 10 names and changes in rank for boys and for girls in England and Wales are as follows:

Table 1: Top 10 baby names in England and Wales, 2012

Rank	Boys			Girls		
	Name	Count	Change in rank since 2011	Name	Count	Change in rank since 2011
1	Harry	7,168		-Amelia	7,061	-
2	Oliver	6,669		-Olivia	4,585	-
3	Jack	6,239		-Jessica	4,165	1
4	Charlie	5,571		1 Emily	4,029	1
5	Jacob	5,268		2 Lily	3,802	-2
6	Thomas	4,893		-Ava	3,779	3
7	Alfie	4,843		-3 Mia	3,524	6
8	Riley	4,825		5 Isla	3,501	7
9	William	4,590		1 Sophie	3,496	-3
10	James	4,495		-2 Isabella	3,358	-

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

4 . Top 100 baby names in England and Wales in 2012

Word clouds for the 100 most popular names for boys and girls are given below. The size of a name represents how many times that name was given, rather than the rank of that name.



Within the 100 most popular boys' names given to babies born in England and Wales in 2012, there were only seven new entries:

- Hugo at number 88 (up 51 places from 139)
- Sonny at number 90 (up 18 places from 108)
- Seth at number 91 (up 10 places from 101)
- Elliott at number 95 (up 12 places from 107)
- Theodore at number 97 (up 27 places from 124)
- Rory at number 99 (up 11 places from 110)
- Ellis at number 100 (up 3 places from 103)

These replaced Joel (101), Hayden (102), John (104), Ashton (111), Jackson (113), Ben (118) and Reece (122) which fell out of the top 100.

Bobby showed the largest rise within the top 100, gaining 19 places to reach number 57. Frankie (up 18 to number 66), Arthur (up 16 to number 52), Jenson and Blake (up 13 to numbers 54 and 66 respectively) were also high climbers.

Aiden (down 19 to number 80), Finlay (down 17 to number 83), Jamie (down 15 to 64) and Rhys (down 14 to number 84) showed the largest falls within the top 100.

There were six new entries in the top 100 most popular girls' names, which were:

- Mollie at number 84 (up 29 places from 113)
- Ivy at number 88 (up 80 places from 168)
- Darcey at number 89 (up 42 places from 131)
- Tilly at number 92 (up 11 places from 103)
- Sara at number 99 (up 10 places from 109)
- Violet at number 100 (up 14 places from 114)

These replaced Lexie (102), Lauren (103), Rebecca (108), Tia (116), Nicole (119) and Kayla (135) which fell out of the top 100.

Elsie, which rose 17 places between 2011 and 2012 to 70, was the highest climber within the top 100, followed by Hollie (up 14 to number 54), Maryam (up 13 to number 81) and Bella (up 11 to number 58).

Isobel (down 18 to number 98), Megan (down 12 to number 41), Amy (down 11 to number 62) and Caitlin (down 11 to number 97) were the names with the largest falls in popularity within the top 100.

There are a number of possible reasons why the popularity of baby names can change over time. The popularity of names can be influenced by names of famous figures or current celebrities and what they name their own babies. However, it is an individual choice which can be influenced by a number of other factors such as the religious, cultural and/or ethnic identities of the parents or the names of family, friends or fictional characters. As such, there is a great diversity of baby names. In 2012, there were 729,674 live births in England and Wales (ONS, 2013), with over 28,000 different boys' names and over 36,000 different girls' names registered. The top 10 names only account for 13% of all names in 2012.

5 . Changes between 2002 and 2012

Five of the top 10 most popular boys' names in 2012 were also in the top 10 in 2002: Jack, Thomas, James, William and Oliver.

When compared with 2002, the biggest increases in popularity for those names in the top 10 in 2012 were Riley (up 114 to number 8), Alfie (up 42 to number 7), Charlie (up 25 to number 4) and Jacob (up 25 to number 5). Benjamin (down 26 to number 32), Joseph (down 14 to number 22), Daniel (down 11 to number 16) and Joshua (down 9 to number 11) have fallen the furthest since being in the top 10 in 2002.

Within the top 100 names, Kayden (up 662 to number 92), Dexter (up 327 to number 70), Ollie (up 306 to number 73) and Jenson (up 242 to number 54) were the highest climbers between 2002 and 2012.

Among the most popular names for baby girls, four names appear in the top 10 in both 2002 and 2012: Olivia, Jessica, Emily and Sophie.

Of the names in the top 10 in 2012, Isla (up 268 to number 8), Ava (up 198 to number 6), Isabella (up 40 to number 10) and Amelia (up 24 to number 1) were the highest climbing new entries when compared with 2002, while Megan (down 35 to number 41), Hannah (down 34 to number 42), Ellie (down 31 to number 35) and Lucy (down 17 to number 27) have fallen the furthest since 2002.

Within the top 100 names, Lexi (up 1,613 to number 46), Ivy (up 911 to number 88), Bella (up 677 to number 58) and Violet (up 556 to number 100) were the highest climbers between 2002 and 2012.

6 . Seasonal variations

Harry was the most popular boys' name in eight months during 2012, with Oliver claiming the top spot in August, September, October and November. Amelia was number one in every month of 2012, with second spot shared between Olivia, Jessica and Lily; with seven, four and one appearance(s) respectively. There were 14 boys' names and 15 girls' names that reached the top 10 for at least one month during 2012.

Holly (number 25 in the annual ranks), the third most popular name for girls in December (number 16 in January), fell to number 44 in June. Summer (number 40 in the annual ranks) reached number 20 in June and August but fell to number 92 in December.

7 . Regional variations

There are some similarities between the top 10 most popular names in England and in Wales in 2012. For boys the two countries have eight common names in the top 10, while for girls the two countries have five common names. However, Jacob is the most popular name for boys born to mothers usually resident in Wales. There are two names in the top 10 for Wales which are not in the top 10 for England: Dylan (number 28 in England) and Mason (number 32 in England). Amelia is the most popular name for girls born to mothers usually resident in England and in Wales. The five names in the top 10 for Wales which are not in the top 10 for England are: Ruby (number 13 in England), Seren (number 151 in England), Evie (number 11 in England), Ella (number 19 in England) and Grace (number 14 in England).

Table 2: Top 10 baby names, by country, 2012

Rank	Boys		Girls	
	England	Wales	England	Wales
1	Harry	Jacob	Amelia	Amelia
2	Oliver	Oliver	Olivia	Ava
3	Jack	Riley	Jessica	Mia
4	Charlie	Jack	Emily	Lily
5	Jacob	Alfie	Lily	Olivia
6	Thomas	Harry	Ava	Ruby
7	Alfie	Charlie	Isla	Seren
8	Riley	Dylan	Sophie	Evie
9	William	William	Mia	Ella
10	James	Mason	Isabella	Grace

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Harry was the most popular name for boys in seven of the regions in England. Jack was the most popular in the North East and Muhammad was the most popular in London.

Among baby girls, Amelia was the most popular name in all regions, in contrast to 2011 when four different names were most popular in at least one region.

Table 3: Most popular name by region 2012

Regions within in England and Wales

Region	Boys	Girls
North East	Jack	Amelia
North West	Harry	Amelia
Yorkshire and The Humber	Harry	Amelia
East Midlands	Harry	Amelia
West Midlands	Harry	Amelia
East	Harry	Amelia
London	Muhammad	Amelia
South East	Harry	Amelia
South West	Harry	Amelia
Wales	Jacob	Amelia

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

8 . Users and uses of baby name statistics

Users of baby name statistics can be split into five groups;

- individuals, which includes parents and soon-to-be parents who want to pick a rare or a popular name for their child or are simply seeking inspiration. Other individuals include people interested in the popularity of their name or the names of friends and family, or names from a particular origin
- special interest groups, such as Bounty, produce their own popularity lists and compare their lists with those published by ONS
- those involved in the manufacture and sale of named items, such as mugs
- researchers, who examine how names are changing over the years and possibly how this reflects changes in culture
- journalists who report and produce articles on the popularity of names

9. Further information

More detailed data for [2012 baby names](#) are available on the ONS website. Data for [1996-2011](#) baby names and historical ranks of baby names for [1904-1994](#) (top 100 ranks at ten year intervals) are also available (see background note 6).

[Quality and Methodology Information \(182.1 Kb Pdf\)](#) documents for baby name and birth statistics are available on the ONS website. Further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to births is available in the [births metadata \(439.7 Kb Pdf\)](#).

[A baby names comparison tool](#) is available which allows you to analyse changing trends in boys and girls names in England and Wales. The tool enables comparison of baby name rankings in 2012 with 2011 and 2002.

An accompanying [video podcast](#) for the 2011 release, using audio commentary and graphical animations to cover the key trends in baby names is also available.

[National Records of Scotland](#) provides baby names statistics for Scotland.

[Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#) provides baby name statistics for Northern Ireland.

A user feedback survey for the baby names release took place in July 2011. The results and responses to this survey are available on the ONS website

10. References

Office for National Statistics (2013) [Births in England and Wales, 2012](#)

11. Background notes

1. Birth registration is a legal requirement under the Births and Deaths Registration Act (1836). The registration of births occurring in England and Wales is a service carried out by the Local Registration Service in partnership with the General Register Office (GRO).
2. The published ranks have been produced using exact spelling of first names given on the birth certificate. Grouping names with similar pronunciation would change the ranks. Although some groupings are straightforward, others are more a matter of opinion, and thus raw data are given so users can group if they wish.
3. The separate England and Wales ranks are based on the usual residence of the mother, rather than where the baby was born.
4. Births where the name of the baby was not stated (16 boys and 9 girls in the 2012 dataset) were excluded from all the ranks. Births where the usual residence of the mother was not in England and Wales or not stated (103 boys and 92 girls in the 2012 dataset) were excluded from the regional ranks and from the separate England and Wales ranks.

5. Baby names with a count of two or less are not included within the tables in order to protect the confidentiality of individuals.
6. ONS took on the responsibility for producing baby name statistics in 2009 and do not have the necessary data to be able to compile figures prior to 1996. For years prior to 1996, the top 100 rankings put together by GRO are published for all possible years (1904-1994 at 10-yearly intervals). This represents all the historic data available.
7. Special extracts and tabulations of baby names data for England and Wales are available to order (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and agreements of costs, where appropriate). Such enquiries should be made to:

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Tel: +44 (0)1329 444 110 E-mail: vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk

The [ONS charging policy](#) is available on the ONS website.

8. We would welcome feedback on the content, format and relevance of this release. Please send feedback to the postal or email address above.
9. Follow ONS on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
10. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs
- are well explained and readily accessible
- are produced according to sound methods
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.