



Classic names become most popular names

Names from days gone by are making a re-emergence as parents choose older style names in preference to new age alternatives.

Star, Summer, Hope and Destiny have been dumped for Emily, Jessica and Chloe as favourites for girl's names in 2003. It's the same with boy's names, with a resurgence in names like Joshua, Jack and Lachlan.

The top 100 names registered with the NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages show that parents are opting for classic names, some with unusual spellings.

Old fashioned names that made the female list were Amelia, Ava, Victoria, Elizabeth, Hannah, Alexandra and Matilda. For the males there was Thomas, William, Samuel, Alexander, Harrison, James, Edward and Oscar. Unusual names were Paris, Kiara, Piper and Tahlia for girls and Cody, Ali, Kai, Finn, Seth, Zane and Jye or Jai for the boys.

Different spellings of popular names were Jorja (Georgia), Jemma (Gemma), Ashleigh (Ashley) and Kaitlyn (Caitlyn). Some names were shortened to Will (William), Zac (Zachary), Jack (Jackson),

John (Jonathon) and Abby (Abigail). Gabrielle competed with Gabriella, Isabelle with Isabella, Madeline with Madeleine, Madison with Maddison.

New names in the top 10 for girls since 2002 are Emma, Ella and Charlotte, edging out Hannah, Olivia and Sophie. For boys, new names in the top 10 are Matthew and Samuel while out from 2002 are Ethan and James.

Overall, names from 2002 and 2003 only differ slightly. Joshua, Jack and Lachlan still remain in the top three as favourites and for girls, Emily, Jessica and Chloe are winners for parents.

Unusual names to make a comeback

Researchers in Britain and the US believe mathematics and basic population genetics can be used to predict that no matter how unusual your baby name is today, it has a chance of becoming very common in the future.

The claim is by Dr Alex Bentley of University College London and Matthew Hahn of Duke University in the US.

"Some parents today who invent some original name for their baby, like 'Grast', could - through simple random chance - unwittingly be determining the names of thousands of children 10 years from now," said Bentley.

Using British and US government data, Bentley and Hahn tracked the popularity of the top 1000 first names for baby girls and boys in the US for every decade in the 20th century.

They found that a few names were thousands of times more popular than the majority with many uncommon names. They said the distribution followed an "elegant mathematical function", called a power law that is maintained over 100 years, even though the population is growing.

Hahn and Bentley developed a model which closely predicts the distribution of name popularity



Lekiah may be an original baby name now, but will it be so in the future?

over the last century. The model is based on the population genetics concept of 'random genetic drift', in which the frequency of genes in a population fluctuates according to chance, and

where there is only a small population of breeding parents.

In their simulation, people randomly copied existing baby names, only occasionally inventing new names.

"We can't predict which newly-invented name will be the name for thousands of babies a decade from now, but we can with all certainty predict that some baby somewhere is being given an original name that will someday become highly popular," said Bentley. "Through basic population genetics, we can predict about how common the most popular one will be."

"We found that girls have a 40 per cent higher chance of getting a unique name than boys," said Hahn. "I'd bet that this has a lot to do with life in a patriarchal society, where boys more often get traditional names. It might also show the 'playground effect' - boys with unusual names are going to be teased mercilessly."

Source: www.abc.net.au

Trends of Birth Rates

In 1903, when the crude birth rate was lower than it had ever been before, the Royal Commission on the Decline in the Birth-rate and On the Mortality of Infants in New South Wales was appointed.

It reported in 1904 and concluded that '...the cause or causes of the decline of the birth-rate must be a force or forces over which the people themselves have control...'. In Other words, couples were limiting the size of their families.

At the turn of the century there were 117 births per 1000 women of child bearing age (15-44 years). This approximates a total fertility rate of 3.5 babies per woman. By 1924 the total fertility rate was 3.0 falling.

In 1934, in the middle of the Great Depression, the total fertility rate fell to 2.1 babies per woman. It then increased during the second half of the depression, as women who had deferred childbearing in the early years of the Depression began to have children. Fertility increased through World War II and the 1950s and peaked in 1961 when the total fertility rate reached 3.6 babies per woman. This period of high fertility is known as the baby boom.

After the 1961 peak, the total fertility rate fell rapidly, to 2.9 babies per woman by 1966. This fall

can be attributed to changing social attitudes, in particular a change in people's perception of desired family size, facilitated by the contraceptive pill becoming available.

During the 1970s the total fertility rate dropped again, falling to below replacement level in 1976. This fall was more marked than the fall in the early 1960s and has been linked to the increasing participation of women in the labour force, coupled with changing attitudes to family size, standard of living and lifestyle choices.

In 1966, peak fertility was among 25 year old women, with 21 per cent having babies. By 1996, peak fertility was among 29 year old women, but only 13 per cent had babies.

- The fertility rate fell from about six babies per woman in the mid-nineteenth century to 3.9 in 1901. After a slight rise, probably a catch-up of births postponed during the 1890s Depression, it subsequently declined to 3.1 by 1921 and, associated with the Great Depression, to 2.1 in 1934. After this it increased to a high of 3.5 in 1961 before commencing the decline to the current level.
- The reason why births outnumber deaths (there were 246,000 births and 129,000 deaths registered

in 2001), despite a below replacement level fertility rate of 1.7 babies per woman, is that there is a large number of women in the child bearing ages - the daughters of the baby boomers. Deaths are projected to outnumber births sometime between the years 2033 and 2046.

- The number of women between 20-39, who between them accounted for 95 per cent of fertility in 2001, is projected to be relatively constant over the next 50 years at about 2.9-3.0 million.
- A change of 0.1 in Australia's fertility rate over the whole of the next 50 years would mean a population change of about one million.
- The decline in fertility is the major reason for the ageing of the population given that immigration has only a marginal impact on the age structure of the Australian population.

Source: <http://anatomy.med.unsw.edu.au>

