

Introduction

Ava and Jacob were the most popular names given to Ohio newborns from 2006 to 2008. However, for babies born to mothers age 45 and older, the most popular names were Grace and Joseph. Variations also existed by county. Michael was the most popular name for newborn boys in Ohio’s urban counties, such as Cuyahoga and Franklin, and Madison ranked higher among girls’ names in rural areas of southern Ohio.

Various resources exist on national and state trends in baby names. However, because CRP has access to raw vital statistics data from the Ohio Department of Health, we were able to analyze baby name patterns at the county and regional levels within Ohio. (Other Franklin County birth and death data from ODH data sets can be found in aggregated form on our DataSource website: <http://datasourcecolumbus.org>.)

For CRP’s seventh Data Byte, we explore in detail patterns and variations in baby names across Ohio. Although the data doesn’t explain why these variations exist, the Data Byte suggests the possible influences of local celebrities and cultural heritage on baby names.

Popular baby names in Ohio

There were 418,438 births in Ohio from 2006-2008. The most popular baby names in Ohio were generally similar to those in the United States, although variations existed in the rank order (Table 1). Some of the differences between popular U.S. and Ohio names can be linked to demographic and cultural factors. For example, the Hispanic boy names Angel and José were in the top 50 in the U.S. but ranked only 188th and 193rd, respectively, in Ohio.

Table 1. Most popular baby names in Ohio 2006–2008 and U.S. 2008

Rank	Boys (Ohio)	Boys (U.S.)	Girls (Ohio)	Girls (U.S.)
1	Jacob	Jacob	Ava	Emma
2	Ethan	Michael	Emma	Isabella
3	Andrew	Ethan	Olivia	Emily
4	Michael	Joshua	Madison	Olivia
5	Logan	Daniel	Abigail	Ava
6	William	Alexander	Isabella	Madison
7	Alexander	Anthony	Emily	Sophia
8	Noah	William	Sophia	Abigail
9	Joseph	Christopher	Hanna	Elizabeth
10	Joshua	Matthew	Addison	Chloe

Source: U.S. Social Security Administration, 2008; Ohio Department of Health, 2006–2008

Figure 1. Top 200 most common names baby names in Ohio, 2006–2008



Featured tool: Tagxedo (www.tagxedo.com)

Notes on the data

Unless otherwise noted, all the analysis in this Data Byte uses 2006–2008 birth records data from the Ohio Department of Health. However, not all birth records contain information on the baby’s name. The analysis used 93% of birth records. The remaining 7% lacked name information for a number of reasons: privacy issues (e.g., adoption); babies who were not named at the time of the initial birth certificate; and babies whose mother did not have a documented residence or had a residence outside of Ohio.

Baby names vary with mother's age

The popularity of Ohio baby names in 2006-2008 varied by the age of the mother. Table 2 divides the data into five groups by the age of the mother. Statewide, each age group had a different girl's name ranked first in popularity. Ava, the most popular girl's name in Ohio, ranked first only for mothers age 25-34. For boys' names, there were four different names ranked number one among the five age groups.

Table 2. Rankings of baby names that are among the five most common names in at least one mother's age group, Ohio, 2006-2008

	Age 17 & under	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45 & older
BOYS					
Aiden	3	7	27	45	55
Andrew	22	23	2	2	11
Anthony	4	5	29	24	24
Christopher	2	8	40	27	3
Ethan	23	4	3	22	24
Jacob	12	6	1	1	5
James	12	12	24	19	3
Jayden	1	3	65	84	55
Joseph	37	19	10	6	1
Logan	37	2	4	21	55
Matthew	28	30	16	4	35
Michael	5	1	7	5	2
Nicholas	28	45	13	3	11
William	41	25	5	7	18
GIRLS					
Aaliyah	4	32	141	259	#N/A
Abigail	41	18	4	8	21
Alexis	2	2	22	29	7
Ava	22	5	1	5	21
Elizabeth	35	28	13	9	3
Emily	16	11	9	4	21
Emma	17	4	2	3	7
Grace	106	35	10	7	1
Hailey	5	9	39	72	50
Madison	3	1	5	11	7
Nevaeh	1	3	78	167	50
Olivia	18	6	3	1	2
Rachel	176	126	55	21	3
Sarah	176	75	21	6	3
Sophia	77	33	8	2	3

Note: Cells are highlighted to show most common names in each age group. The top five rankings in each age group are shown in bolded type. Duplicate rank numbers means that the names are tied in frequency.

Rankings differed across mothers' age groups for some of the names. Jayden, which ranked first for baby boys of mothers age 17 and under, did not appear in the top 50 names for the 25-34, 35-44, or 45 and older age groups. On the other hand, the names Grace, Rachel, and Sarah were popular among older mothers of baby girls but ranked low for younger mothers.

Baby names do not always vary by mother's age. Jacob, Madison, and several other names were popular across age groups. Michael ranked in the top 10 of boys' names for mothers in all age groups. The names Christopher and Alexis were more popular among both younger mothers (under age 24) and older mothers (45 and older) but less popular with mothers in the 25-44 age range.

Greater variety among girls' names

Popular boys' names tend to be used more frequently than girls' names of the same rank. From 2006 to 2008, one in every two newborn boys in Ohio (51%) was given a name that ranked among the 100 most common boys' names, compared to only one in three girls (38%) for the 100 most common girls' names.

Name that baby!

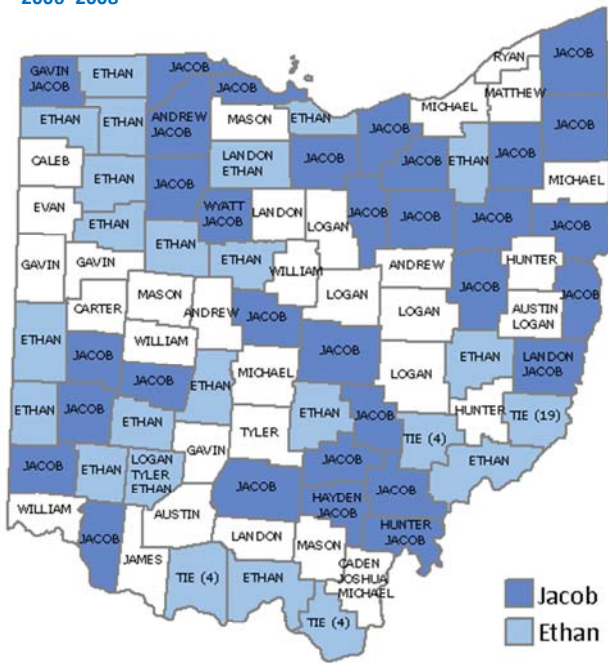
In the United States, parents enjoy complete freedom—despite some raised eyebrows—in choosing names for their children. In contrast, some countries have laws and guidelines restricting name selection. Statutes in Sweden and New Zealand prevent baby names that might cause “offense” or “discomfort.” In Germany and Denmark, gender must be revealed by the first name, and common last names cannot be used as first names. Parents in Denmark can choose from an approved list of 7,000 names; deviating from this list requires review by church and government officials. And in China it is strongly suggested that name spellings use only those characters easily recognizable to electronic identity card readers.

Source: Israel, David K. "Oh no, you can't name your baby THAT!" *Mental Floss*, July 3, 2010. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/07/03/mf.baby.naming.laws/index.html?hpt=C2>

Popular baby boys' names by county

Figure 2 shows the baby name that was ranked first in each Ohio county for babies born in 2006-2008. The top two boys' names statewide, Jacob and Ethan, were also the most popular names in the majority of counties. However, there are 32 counties (out of 88) where other names were the most popular.

Figure 2. Baby boys' names that ranked first in Ohio counties, 2006-2008



Key. County names and urbanized areas



Hunter was the most popular boy's name in three counties: Carroll, Meigs, and Noble. Gavin was the most popular boy's name in three western counties, whereas Logan was the most popular in five central/eastern counties. Both Gavin and Logan were among the top 20 boy names in the state, at 19th and 5th place, respectively.

Figures 3 and 4 below show the rank of the names Jacob and Michael, respectively, in each county. Darker shades indicate higher rankings for the popularity of the name in the county. Jacob was in the list of top 10 boys' names in counties throughout the state, but counties where Michael was popular were concentrated in the northeastern region of the state, and in the two most populous counties, Cuyahoga and Franklin.

Figure 3. Rank of the name Jacob in Ohio counties, 2006-2008

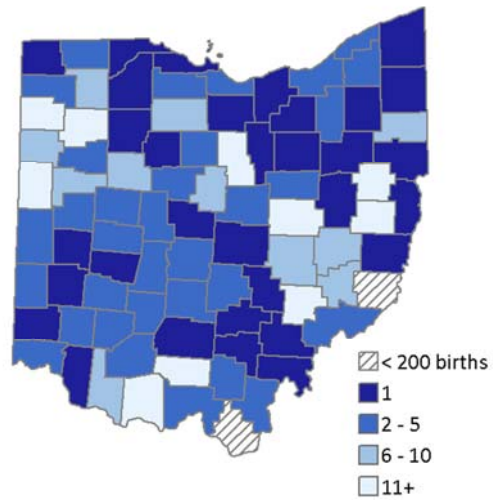
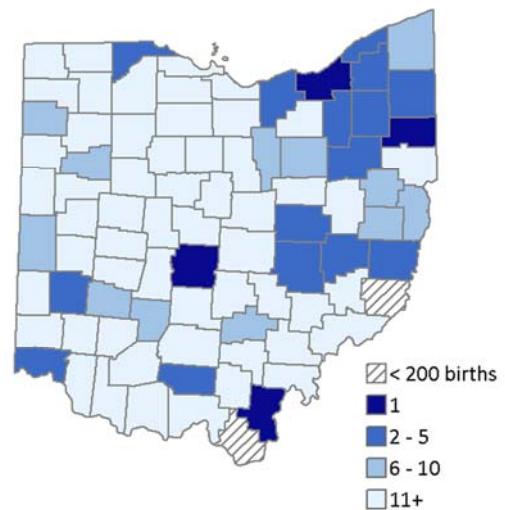


Figure 4. Rank of the name Michael in Ohio counties, 2006-2008

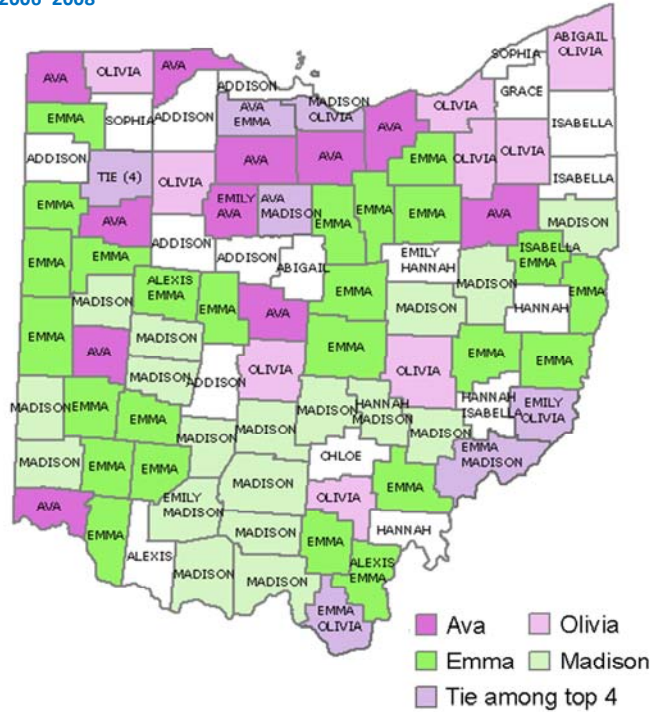


Note: Figures 3 and 4 have masked data for Lawrence and Monroe counties due to relatively few births from 2006 to 2008.

Popular baby girls' names by county

The four most popular girls' names—Ava, Emma, Olivia, and Madison—were the most popular girls' names in more than 75% of Ohio counties (70 out of 88). Olivia, ranked third in the state, was the most popular name in Cuyahoga and Franklin counties (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Baby girls' names that ranked first in Ohio counties, 2006–2008



Key. County names and urbanized areas



Hannah was the most popular girl's name in three counties (Harrison, Meigs, and Perry) and was ninth most common in the state overall. In a cluster of six northern and eastern counties (Hardin, Lucas, Madison, Marion, Ottawa, and, Paulding), Addison was the most popular girl's name.

Figures 6 and 7 show the rank of the names Ava and Madison, respectively, in each county. Darker shades indicate higher rankings for the popularity of the name in the county. Ava was in the list of top 10 girls' names in northern and western Ohio counties, but Madison—ranking fourth in the state list for girls—was popular in the southern region of the state.

Figure 6. Rank of the name Ava in Ohio counties, 2006–2008

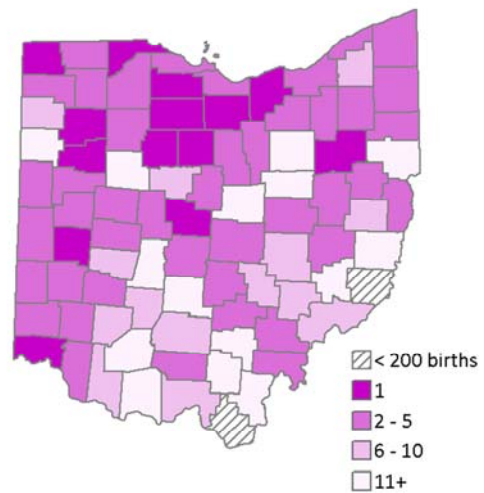
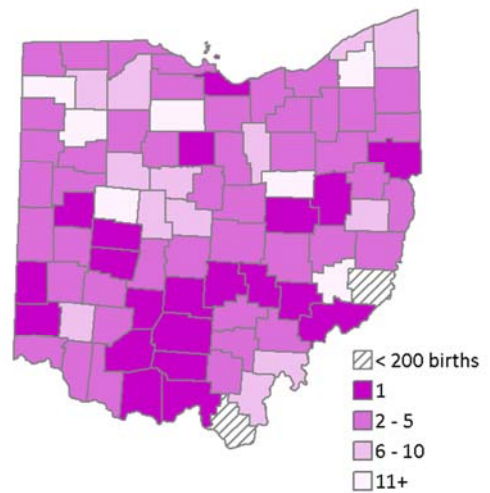


Figure 7. Rank of the name Madison in Ohio counties, 2006–2008



Note: Figures 6 and 7 have masked data for Lawrence and Monroe counties due to relatively few births from 2006 to 2008.

Are some names more “urban” than others?

The four most popular boys’ and girls’ names—Jacob, Ethan, Ava, and Emma—were also among the 10 most popular names in more than 75% of Ohio counties (at least 66 out of 88). However, other top 10 Ohio names were found less frequently in the top 10 names of individual counties (Table 3).

Table 3. Number of counties in which the 10 most common baby names in Ohio were ranked in the county’s top 10, 2006-2008

Rank	Boy’s name	Number of counties	Girl’s name	Number of counties
1	Jacob	75	Ava	68
2	Ethan	66	Emma	80
3	Andrew	51	Olivia	65
4	Michael	28	Madison	75
5	Logan	57	Abigail	63
6	William	20	Isabella	43
7	Alexander	23	Emily	48
8	Noah	26	Sophia	26
9	Joseph	21	Hannah	42
10	Joshua	15	Addison	45

Michael ranked ahead of Logan statewide but was in the top 10 in only 28 counties, about half the number than for Logan (57). Similarly, Sophia was in the top 10 for only 26 counties, while Hannah and Addison, were in the top ten for 42 and 45 counties, respectively.

Table 4. Most common names by urbanization category*

Rank	Urban	Suburban	Appalachian	Non-Appalachian rural
BOYS				
1	Michael	Jacob	Jacob	Jacob
2	Jacob	Ethan	Ethan	Ethan
3	Andrew	Andrew	Logan	Logan
4	William	Logan	Andrew	Gavin
5	Anthony	Michael	William	Mason
GIRLS				
1	Ava	Ava	Emma	Emma
2	Olivia	Emma	Madison	Ava
3	Madison	Olivia	Hannah	Madison
4	Emma	Madison	Abigail	Olivia
5	Sophia	Isabella	Olivia	Addison

*See appendix for counties included in each urbanization category

Though names like Michael and Sophia were popular in fewer counties, they rank high in Ohio overall because these counties are more populous. Table 4 categorizes

Ohio’s counties as urban, suburban, Appalachian, and non-Appalachian rural (see Appendix for list). Michael was the most popular name in the urban counties but did not appear in the top five of the other categories. Sophia was ranked fifth in the urban counties.

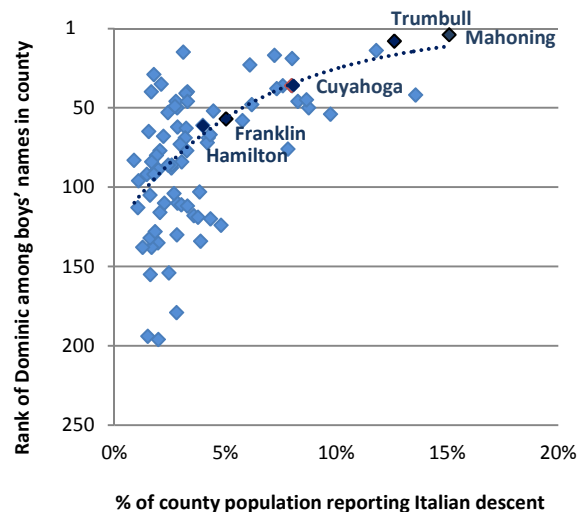
This categorization of Ohio counties reveals other variations. Abigail and Hannah were only among the top five girl names in Appalachian counties, and Gavin and Mason only in non-Appalachian rural counties.

Dominic: Possible effect of Italian heritage

From 2006 to 2008, 934 baby boys in Ohio were named Dominic, ranking it 53rd among boys’ names in popularity. Mahoning and Trumbull counties, both located in northeastern Ohio, represented 10% of all babies named Dominic in the state, but only 1% of all births. The name ranked fourth and eighth in the two counties, respectively.

Few popular names can be clearly linked to a particular ethnic group. A name like Maria, for example, can be linked to multiple groups and is a popular name in general. Dominic has a relatively clear, but not exclusive, connection to people of Italian descent. In the 2000 Census, Mahoning and Trumbull counties had the highest shares—15% and 13%, respectively—in Ohio for the population reporting Italian ancestry. Figure 8 plots the rank of the name Dominic in each county against the percentage of the county’s population that reported Italian descent. Among the 80 out of 88 Ohio counties that had at least 300 births, the scatterplot shows some relationship between the two variables.

Figure 8. Rank of the name Dominic by percentage of population that reported Italian ancestry

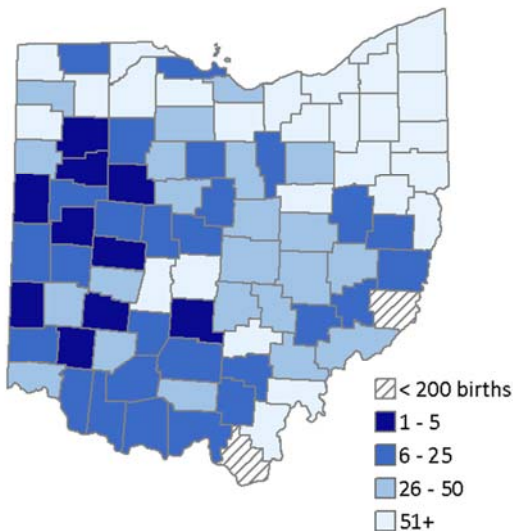


Carson: Possible effect of local celebrity

Overall, it is difficult to attribute naming trends to the influence of celebrities. In their best-selling book *Freakonomics*, Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner took a closer look at the name Britney (and other spelling variations) to analyze the effect of Britney Spears's popularity. They concluded that the singer did not cause a boom in the name's popularity in the mid-1990s, but instead her name was a marker of an earlier time when Britney was a popular name.

To assess the influence of celebrity at the county level is even more difficult, because many celebrities are known nationally and worldwide. However, professional athletes are a type of celebrity that can be clearly and strongly connected to place. Among Ohio's athletes' names, we looked for the potential effects of Carson (Palmer, Cincinnati Bengals quarterback) and Lebron (James, former Cleveland Cavaliers forward).

Figure 10. Rank of the name Carson in Ohio counties, 2006–2008



Note: Figure 10 have masked data for Lawrence and Monroe counties due to relatively few births from 2006 to 2008.

From 2006 to 2008, 1,119 newborn boys in Ohio were named Carson. It ranked 45th in popularity among boys' names in the state during this period, compared to 89th nationally in 2008 (Social Security data). At the Ohio county level, Carson was a relatively popular name in the central and western portions of the state, particularly around the cities of Cincinnati and Lima. In contrast, the name was not in the top 50 in any northeast Ohio county. Although Carson is a common enough name to not always be associated with the quarterback, it is ranked higher in and around southwest Ohio.

Compared to all the Carsons born in Ohio from 2006 to 2008, only 30 babies were given the name Lebron as either their first or middle name. This gap may be due to the uniqueness of Lebron, a name that can clearly be attributed to the basketball player.

Concluding thoughts

Using data from the Ohio Department of Health, this Data Byte goes beyond the analysis and media coverage of baby names based on widely available Social Security Administration (SSA) data. For example, the analysis of how naming patterns vary by mother's age is possible with ODH vital statistics data but not with SSA data.

Looking in-depth within Ohio shows that baby-naming patterns vary even from county to county. Names such as Sophia are more popular in urban areas, whereas other names like Abigail are more popular in Appalachia. The examples of Dominic and Carson highlight two names that suggest reasons for name variations among Ohio counties.

About Community Research Partners

Community Research Partners (CRP) is a unique nonprofit research center that strengthens Ohio communities through data, information, and knowledge. CRP works in a wide range of fields, including education, health, housing, employment, safety, poverty, community development, and race and diversity. Since its formation in 2000, CRP has undertaken more than 230 research, evaluation, and community data projects both within and outside of central Ohio.

CRP is a partnership of the City of Columbus, United Way of Central Ohio, The Ohio State University, and the Franklin County Commissioners. CRP is a partner in the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership and is the Ohio partner for the national Working Poor Families Project.

For more information regarding this document or CRP projects, programs, and services:

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- E-mail info@researchpartners.org
- Visit our websites:
<http://www.researchpartners.org>
<http://www.datasourcecolumbus.org>
<http://www.ohioworkforcecoalition.org>

Appendix: Classification of Ohio counties

Urban	Suburban	Appalachian	Non-Appalachian Rural
Allen	Butler	Adams	Ashland
Cuyahoga	Clark	Athens	Ashtabula
Franklin	Delaware	Belmont	Auglaize
Hamilton	Erie	Brown	Champaign
Lucas	Fairfield	Carroll	Clinton
Mahoning	Fulton	Clermont	Crawford
Montgomery	Geauga	Columbiana	Darke
Stark	Greene	Coshocton	Defiance
Summit	Lake	Gallia	Fayette
	Licking	Guernsey	Hancock
	Lorain	Harrison	Hardin
	Madison	Highland	Henry
	Medina	Hocking	Huron
	Miami	Holmes	Knox
	Morrow	Jackson	Logan
	Ottawa	Jefferson	Marion
	Pickaway	Lawrence	Mercer
	Portage	Meigs	Paulding
	Preble	Monroe	Putnam
	Richland	Morgan	Sandusky
	Trumbull	Muskingum	Seneca
	Union	Noble	Shelby
	Warren	Perry	Van Wert
	Wood	Pike	Wayne
		Ross	Williams
		Scioto	Wyandot
		Tuscarawas	
		Vinton	
		Washington	