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## JACK'S BACK AND MIA TOPS THE YEAR

In the lead up to the release of Baby Names Australia 2009, Social Researcher Mark McCrindle shares some of his insights into the nationwide top 100 list of children names registered in 2008.

### AUSTRALIA'S MOST POPULAR BABY NAMES (THE TOP 10)

#### BOYS

Jack	1
William	2
Lachlan	3
Joshua	4
Riley	5
Thomas	6
Cooper	7
Oliver (NEW)	8
James	9
Ethan	10

#### GIRLS

Mia
Chloe
Isabella
Charlotte
Emily
Ella
Olivia
Sienna
Ava (NEW)
Sophie

Jack continues to cement its popularity in the 2000s as the top boy's name for the seventh time in the last nine years – second only to Joshua in 2000 and 2003 (another popular 'J' name). While it is also Jack's fifth consecutive year at #1, this year (unlike previous years) the nearest rival William came in a relatively close second (150 behind). Even closer is this year's new #1 for girls. With Ella dropping down five spots after topping the list for the last two years, this year Mia edged out close contender Chloe by just 48 babies!

### GENDERED FOR SOUND

Australian parents are consistently registering baby names that are undoubtedly gendered. There is a particular preference for soft-sounding girls names with 50% of the top ten beginning with a vowel and 90% ending in a vowel sound. Conversely, the dominant trend for branding boys is the firm-sounding consonant prefix (80%) and consonant suffix (80%). Additionally, only one of the 20 names featured in both of the top ten lists is occasionally adopted as a unisex option (Riley) while the remaining 19 were not interchangeable between the sexes. Even Olivia and Oliver while being spelt similarly, are of different syllable lengths and are from surprisingly different origins (Latin and Scandinavian/Old German respectively).

“Now that Generation X are parents they are showing their conservative side. Today’s parents are avoiding gender neutral names. The Top 10 boys names are strong sounding, shorter names (1 -3 syllables) while the girls names are softer and longer (all ending in vowels (and y) and 2-4 syllables” states Mark McCrindle. “Yet there is a creativity in their conservatism with the traditional names (like William, Thomas and Charlotte) sharing the Top 10 with trendy new entrants (like Mia, Chloe and Cooper)”.

## **SYLLABLES AND LETTERS**

Further contributing to the sound of any given first name are the number of syllables and letters involved. Looking at the latest top 100 lists for both boys and girls, the number of syllables peaks at two while the number of letters peaks at six. This is, however, where the similarities end. Again, we see a clear difference with softer, florid tendencies among females as Australian girls are at least two times more likely than boys to have a name consisting of three or more syllables (40% and 18% respectively) and eight or more letters (16% and 8% respectively). Meanwhile, approximately 5 in 6 boys (82%) are bestowed with names comprising less than three syllables, making them almost three times more likely than girls to own a single-syllable first name (19% and 7% respectively).

## **INITIAL TRENDS**

Perhaps our preoccupation with the name Jack is so deep that it is affecting our choices subconsciously. So much so that the three most popular initials in the top 100 first names for boys almost spell it out (J, A and C – in that order). In fact, J names accounted for over 12,000 boys born in 2008, with seven J names featuring in the top 30 (e.g. Jack, Joshua, James, Jacob, Jayden, Jake and Jackson). Girls’ names, on the other hand, are most likely to begin with A (e.g. Ava, Amelia), S (e.g. Sienna, Sophie, Sarah), M (e.g. Mia, Madison) and E (e.g. Emily, Ella, Emma).

## **AUSSIE NAMES**

Current Australian naming trends most closely resemble those of our next-door neighbour New Zealand and our ancestor England. Even so, there are a few girls’ names in the Australian top 100 list whose popularity remains unmatched outside of our borders – most notably Matilda and Tahlia.

## **THE PRIME MOVERS**

The big advances on the boys’ list this year are Ryder (up 30 to #98), Archie (up 29 to #61), Lincoln (up 25 to #67) and Owen (up 25 to #75). Meanwhile, the largest climber overall is attributable to Isla (up 66 to #55), with other significant gains coming from Gabriella (up 37 to #76), Charli (up 36 to #60) and Indiana (up 34 to #86).

“The fashion of names has certainly changed in a generation” states researcher Mark McCrindle. “In the 1950’s John was the number 1 boy’s name (now #107), Peter was 2nd (now #119), and Michael was 3rd (now #39). For girls in the 1950’s Susan was 1st, Margaret 2nd and Anne was 3rd. None of these 3 names were amongst the 130 girls names recorded for 2008.”

## THE BIGGEST LOSERS

The steepest declines for boys are Jamie (down 28 to #124), John (down 26 to #107), Brayden (down 23 to #118) and Christopher (down 20 to #82). These numbers are even larger for girls, particularly Kaitlyn (down 42 to #), Erin (down 37 to #98), Taylah (down 28 to #114) Rebecca (down 25 to #110) and Victoria (down 25 to #119).

## STATE BY STATE

- Even though it registered as runner-up, Chloe managed to top the list in more states than this year's winner, Mia.
- There were four more girls named Victoria registered in VIC than in NSW.
- Elizabeth was more popular in NSW than in Queensland.

## #1 boys' and girls' names, 2008 - by state and territory

ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	VIC	WA
William	Jack	William	Jack	Jack	William	Jack
Olivia	Chloe	Isabella	Chloe	Emily	Mia	Ella

Note: Data for Tasmania is unavailable

## LET'S GET POLITICAL

- Kevin ranked #135 in the country while Malcolm proved to be a much rarer option (only 3 were registered nationally).
- Similarly, Julia ranked #136 but Julie was nowhere to be found.
- Joe (or Joseph) proved to be more popular than Tony (or Anthony) and Peter combined (ranked #49, #83 and #119 respectively)!
- Nathan ranked #44 in the nation while very few boys were named Barry (only 2 were registered nationally).

## SPELL IT AGAIN

In the event that the top 100 lists was produced by combining multiple different spellings of the same name, the girls' list would look substantially different. In particular, the top ten would feature Lily / Lilly at #3 and Madison / Maddison at #10. Other changes high-up the ladder would include Georgia / Jorja (#20), Isabelle / Isabel (#23), Caitlin / Caitlyn / Kaitlyn / Katelyn (#27) and Sophia / Sofia (#30).

## WHEN WILL MY BABY BE FAMOUS?

Though there are the countless names listed in baby name books, dictionaries and websites (read by at least 75% of today's expectant parents), a lot of parents seem to gravitate towards those associated with celebrities. Take for instance:

- Sienna (Miller) Lily (Allen), Ruby (Rose), Imogen (Bailey), Eva (Mendes/Longoria Parker), Scarlett (Johansson), Isla (Fisher), Charli (Delaney), Keira (Knightley), Isabel (Lucas), Angelina (Jolie).
- Jack (Black), (Prince) William, Harrison (Ford), (Prince) Harry, Xavier (Rudd), Hamish (and) Blake, Seth (Green), Ashton (Kutcher), (Prince) Charles.

## PREDICTIONS

Although already reasonably popular, we could see a surge in both Jackson and Michael in 2009, with a possible decline for Hamish (particularly in QLD). Meanwhile, Matilda and Isla are likely to go from strength to strength.

Source: This Baby Names Report is the only national compilation of all Australian births registered by the individual State and Territory registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Tasmanian data is not available). McCrindle Research data and ABS data is also included.

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