

Final statistics

Information Paper

Historical Baby Names in Northern Ireland

Background information

January 2024

As part of the on-going Modernisation Programme, the General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland undertook a project aimed at digitising approximately eight million historic paper based registrations back to 1845. As a result, NISRA gained access to all historic birth records for analysis. All historical data has been subject to the same validation and cleansing process as is carried out today, further details of which are available in the [Baby Names Information Paper](#). It has been necessary to carry out additional validation on pre-1997 records to ensure records have been digitised correctly

NISRA annually publish statistics relating to [popular first names](#) given to babies from birth registrations recorded by GRO, including counts and ranks for all names dating back to 1997. The [interactive search tool](#) for baby names has been expanded to include a tab specially for the historical data that NISRA has gained access to.

As mentioned, the historical data was processed in the same way as current data on baby names, however, there were some limitations to the quality assurance that could be completed.

- i) While the number of registrations matched the official published totals for births, the first names on some registrations were unrecognisable or missing and have thus been removed from the published Baby Names database. As a result, historical baby names totals, particularly for earlier years, may not match previously published birth figures.
- ii) Records have been validated against camera-copy records. In some instances names which were queried as a possible misspelling or incorrect sex have remained unchanged in the dataset as the digitised records matched the original verbatim. In the absence of further evidence, these have not been edited in the data.

Data from 1997 onwards have been unaffected. The historical series includes baby names registered between 1922 and 2022.