

Sample assignment 7
Exploring trends in baby name data

Overview

The goals of this assignment are to introduce you to the ways in which names and naming patterns can change over time, and to give you experience finding and presenting patterns in a large set of data. Specifically, you'll be analyzing the names given to babies born in the UK in the twentieth century, using data provided by the Office for National Statistics. The data provides the top 100 baby names per sex for one year from each decade between 1914 and 2004.

Part A

The following is a list of the names of all British monarchs dating back to 1066:

Anne, Charles, Edward, Elizabeth, George, Henry, James, John, Mary, Philip, Richard, Stephen, Victoria, William

Your task in this part of the assignment is to investigate whether these names are less popular choices for British babies in recent years than they used to be. Specifically, there are two questions we're interested in answering:

1. Has the **number** of these names that appear in the top 100 baby names decreased over time?
2. When these names do appear in the top 100 baby names, has their **average rank** fallen over time? In other words, perhaps *James* has been among the top 100 names in every year under study, but its rank has fallen from 1st place to 50th place over time, and the other names have behaved similarly.

To answer these questions, first complete the following two sets of tables, providing the **number of these monarch names** that appear among the top 100 names over the years, and the **average rank of these monarch names** in the top 100 over the years. When analyzing the data, count **only the names in the list above**; do not include names that sound similar in your count (so, count *Anne* but exclude *Ann*, etc.).

Hint: Scrolling through the spreadsheet to find each monarch name will be tedious and inefficient. Instead, you will want to sort the data by name and put a code (e.g. 'm') in a blank column next to each instance of a monarch name. Then, use the =COUNTIFS () command to count up the number of 'm'-coded names attested in each year under study, and the =AVERAGEIFS () command to average the ranks of the 'm'-coded names attested in each year under study.

	1914	1924	1934	1944	1954
Number of monarch names in top 100	—	—	—	—	—
	1964	1974	1984	1994	2004
Number of monarch names in top 100	—	—	—	—	—

Round your answers to the nearest whole number for the following two tables.

	1914	1924	1934	1944	1954
Average rank of monarch names in top 100	—	—	—	—	—

	1964	1974	1984	1994	2004
Average rank of monarch names in top 100	—	—	—	—	—

Now, summarize your findings: Are these names are less popular choices for British babies than they used to be?

Part B

Baby name researchers have found that the number of names ending in <n> given to American babies has increased over the course of the twentieth century (e.g. Wattenberg 2007). This is strictly a fact about **spelling**, not about **sound**, because names ending in <ne> have not shown the same pattern, despite the fact that they, like names ending in <n>, end in the [n] sound. Your task in this part of the assignment is to investigate whether the same holds true in the UK: that is, whether there has been an increase between 1914 and 2004 in the number of names among the top 100 that end in the <n> spelling, the [n] sound, both, or neither.

First, complete the following two sets of tables, providing the **number of names ending in <n>** that appear amongst the top 100 in each decade, and **the number of names ending in <ne>** that appear amongst the top 100 in each decade.

Hint: The =RIGHT() command will give you the rightmost character(s) of a name. Then, you can use the =COUNTIFS() command to count up the number of times a given pattern was attested in a given year.

	1914	1924	1934	1944	1954
Number of names ending in <n> in top 100	—	—	—	—	—

	1964	1974	1984	1994	2004
Number of names ending in <n> in top 100	—	—	—	—	—

Important note: The name *Daphne* appears among the top 100 names in **1924, 1934, and 1944**. This name does not end in the [n] sound, so it is not relevant to our study. Accordingly, **subtract 1** from your counts for those three years to exclude it.

	1914	1924	1934	1944	1954
Number of names ending in <ne> in top 100	—	—	—	—	—

	1964	1974	1984	1994	2004
Number of names ending in <ne> in top 100	—	—	—	—	—

Now, address the question of whether there has been an increase between 1914 and 2014 in popular baby names ending with the <n> **spelling**, the [n] **sound**, **both**, or **neither**.

References

Wattenberg, Laura. 2007. "Where all boys end up nowadays." BabyName Wizard Name Blog. <http://www.babynamewizard.com/archives/2007/7/where-all-boys-end-up-nowadays>. Accessed February 14, 2018.