

POPULARITY EVOLUTION IN GIVEN NAMES

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Identity of an individual in a human society is specified by his (her) name. Unlike family names, usually inherited from fathers, a given name for a child is often chosen at the parents disposal. However, their decision cannot be made in a vacuum but affected by social conventions and trends. Furthermore, such social pressure changes in time, as new names gain popularity while some other names are gradually forgotten. In this paper, we investigate how popularity of given names have evolved over the last century by using datasets collected in Korea, the province of Quebec in Canada, and the United States. In each of these countries, the average popularity of given names exhibits typical patterns of rise and fall with a time scale of about one generation. We also observe that notable changes of diversity in given names signal major social changes.