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Reflection of Identity in Given Names of Latvia Over the Last Century*

1. Introduction

The aim of the article is to highlight trends in given names reflecting the identity in Latvia over the last 100 years, assessing their diversity within the context of Latvian history. The main focus is on the most significant trends in personal names from the establishment of the Latvian state in 1918 to the present day, linking these trends to cultural, historical, and political processes in Latvia and comparing them within the European context. In conclusion, this article explores the dynamics of personal names in Latvia during the last century within a wide and complicated context.

Authors of this study are currently working on a new dictionary of given names of Latvia, and, through the examination and analysis of personal names, have arrived at some new insights, revising or supplementing previously known or accepted views.

Data of this article derived from the forthcoming *Dictionary of Given Names in Latvia* (expected to be published by the end of 2025), as well as information obtained from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of Latvia (PMLP), and the data from the homepage created by the Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia with the 100 most popular given names of newborns in Latvia since 1918, where their dynamics are shown at five-year intervals (CSB).

The article consists of two parts: the first part shortly introduces the concept of a new *Dictionary of Given Names in Latvia*, and thus presents and justifies the selection of data used in the study; the second part delves into the most pronounced trends and their possible cultural, historical, and political causes, dividing anthroponymical material into three periods: a) time of the first independence of Latvia (especially 1920s and 1930s); b) Soviet period (1940s–1980s); c) time of second independence of Latvia (from 1990).

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2. Regarding the upcoming Dictionary

Until now, the only dictionary of Latvian personal names (SILIŅŠ 1990) was published more than 30 years ago. Its compiler, Klāvs Siliņš, was not a linguist: he studied theology, worked as an engineer, bookkeeper, and throughout his life collected given names from different sources and different ages. His dictionary *Latviešu personvārdu vārdnīca* contains about 8,000 given names of varying degrees of reliability. The forthcoming dictionary of given names will focus on personal names in modern Latvia. Considering the project timeline and restricted resources (only two authors and 2.5 years), it was decided to include entries for: a) traditional Latvian calendar names; b) 200 most popular male and female names among citizens of Latvia; c) 200 most popular names given to girls and boys in the last 20 years (also only among citizens). Altogether, the list consists of approximately 1200 entries.

The reasons for such a scope for a new dictionary and the choice of entries of given names include: a) creating a clearly defined range to avoid confusion over name variants and to be able to answer questions like “Why is my name not included?”; b) covering as wide an audience as possible, i.e. choosing all nationalities; c) allowing users to learn about the origin/etymology of the given names; d) introducing readers to the most common, and thus most frequently heard, personal names in Latvia: popularity, or spread in Latvia, over different periods of the 20th century are added as well; e) revealing the trends in name-giving over recent decade.

While working on the new dictionary, what aspects of personal identity were discovered reflected within the given names from the last century?

3. First Period—Manifestation of Nationalism in Personal Names

The earliest noticeable trend during the period under review is the giving of distinctly Latvian names, based on Latvian language and vocabulary, during the 1920s and 1930s. This trend is part of a broader process starting with the national cultural revival in Europe at the end of the 18th century and continuing through the 19th century in many countries. In Latvia, it relates to the “First Awakening” and Young Latvians’ (Latv. *jaunlatvieši*) movement, which in the 1950s started with the first Latvian students. During that time of raising the national self-awareness of peasant Latvians (such were the vast majority of Latvians at that time) and cultivating the language, appeared the first suggestions for giving personal names of national, i.e., Latvian origin, however it did not generate a wide response. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, authors of national romanticism had a greater influence. From their works, given names of Latvian origin entered circulation and encouraged the creation of other similar names. Latvian writers and poets



like Auseklis (1850–1879), Andrejs Pumpurs (1841–1902), Rainis (1865–1929), and Aspazija (1865–1943) contributed to the popularity of Latvian-origin names, which peaked in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, in his plays, Rainis used names such as *Laimdota* (meaning ‘given by destiny/happiness’), *Saulvedis* (‘one who brought the sun’), and *Lelde* (likely a phonetic derivative) ‘?’. Here could also be mentioned such hypocoristics coined from international names, used by Rainis in his works and popular until present time only among Latvians: *Zane*, Latvian hypocoristic form from international female name *Zuzanna*, and *Baiba*, Latvian hypocoristic from international *Barbara*. The given names coined based on Latvian appellatives and probably created by poet Aspazija and used in her plays are *Dzirkstīte* (dim. ‘spark’), *Guna* (< Latv. *uguns*, *guns* ‘fire’), *Liesma* (‘flame’).

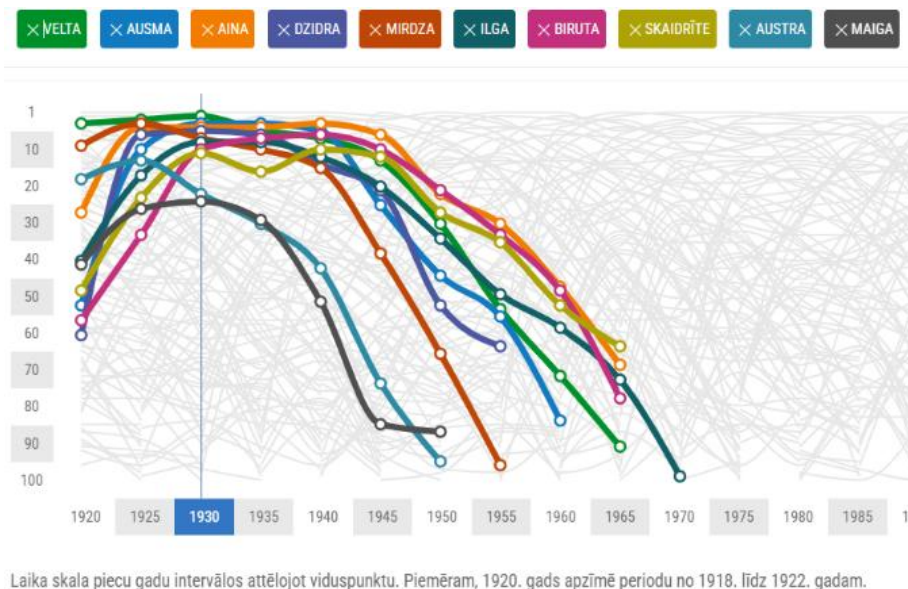


Figure 1. National culture: girls' names. Data: CSB.

Based on the data from the Department of Statistics (CSB), during the late 1920s to early 1930s, 10 of the 25 most popular girls' names (i.e. 40%) were names of Baltic, mostly Latvian origin. In order of popularity, they were: *Velta* ‘gift’, *Ausma* ‘dawn’, *Aina* ‘natural view; landscape’?, *Dzidra* ‘clear’, *Mirdza* ‘shining’, *Ilga* < Latv. *ilgoties* ‘to miss’, *Biruta*, *Skaidrīte* ‘clear’, *Austra* ‘dawn’, *Maiga* ‘gentle’ (*Biruta* is a given name of Lithuanian origin but it became popular through Latvian literature). All these names were already given before 1918, but most reached their peak specifically in the 1920s and 1930s. Only *Velta* and *Mirdza*, thanks to the influence of literature, and especially



theatre, were distinctly popular names also earlier. Most of these names were still quite frequently given in the 1940s and 1950s, but then they fell out of the Top 100 girls' names (see Figure 1). One of the reasons for these changes—and this is due in large part to extralinguistic factors—will be discussed a bit later.

A slightly different picture can be seen in Figure 2. There is no pronounced trend of giving boys' names of Latvian origin. As shown in the Figure, from 1928 to 1932, out of the 40 most popular boys' names, only five are of Latvian origin: *Imants* (4th place), *Laimonis* (< Latv. *laime* 'happiness', 19th place), *Valdis* (< Latv. *valdīt* 'to rule', 20th place), *Visvaldis* (< Latv. *viss* 'all' + *valdīt* 'to rule', 32nd place), and *Vilnis* ('wave', 38th place). *Imants* is an adapted Livonian name, more associated with the popularity of ancient legends, but it fits into the national romanticism trend. As observed, only the names *Laimonis* and *Visvaldis* have a pronounced popularity curve similar to the girls' names with a peak in the 1930s. *Valdis*, *Imants* and *Vilnis* continued to remain among the popular boys' names, with *Valdis* and *Vilnis* reaching their maximum popularity in the mid-1940s. It should also be noted that these names are semantically more neutral compared to *Visvaldis* and *Laimonis*.

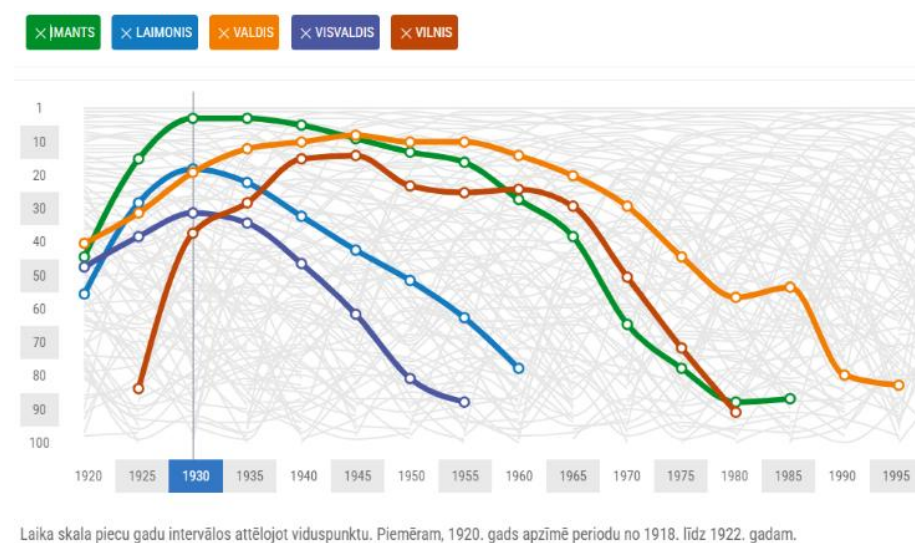


Figure 2. National culture: boys' names. Data: CSB.

A similar development in the trend of national personal names is observed in many other parts of Europe, for example, in Germany (KUNZE 2000: 53), where, under the influence of Romanticism, German-origin names re-entered circulation in the 19th century, and this trend continued until the 1930s. This



trend was similarly evident in Lithuania (KUZAVINIS–SAVUKYNAS 2009: 28–31), Estonia (RAJANDI 1966: 9; SEPPÖ 1994: 7–8; HUSSAR 2021), Finland (VILKUNA 1997; AINIÄLA–SAARELMA–SJÖBLOM 2012; SAARELMA–PAUKKALA 2017: 28–30), and many other countries. Thus, Latvian personal names, especially female names, fit into the broader context of European cultural development.

4. Influence of 20th century political situations on the anthroponymicon in Latvia

When analyzing the second period under review—the so-called Soviet era—an important aspect to consider is the change in the national composition of the population, both in Latvia as a whole and within its regions.

As a result of the deliberately promoted Russification policies of the Soviet Union, aimed at solidifying Latvia as an integral part of the USSR, several hundred thousand Soviet citizens, particularly Russians, settled in Latvia over fifty years. This changed the linguistic and anthroponymic landscape, affecting the variety of names.

Ethnicity	1925	1935	1959	1970	1979	1989	2000	2022
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Latvians	73,4	76,9	62,0	56,8	53,7	52,0	57,7	60,2
Russians	10,5	8,8	26,6	29,8	32,8	34,0	29,6	24,4
Ukrainians	0,0	0,1	1,4	2,3	2,7	3,5	2,7	3,0
Belarussians	2,1	1,4	2,9	4,0	4,5	4,5	4,1	3,0
Poles	2,8	2,6	2,9	2,7	2,5	2,3	2,5	2,0
Lithuanians	1,3	1,2	1,6	1,7	1,5	1,3	1,4	1,2
Jews	5,2	4,9	1,8	1,6	1,1	0,9	0,4	0,4
Germans	3,8	3,3	0,1	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2

Table 1. *Ethnic composition in Latvia. Data: PMLP.*

A small insight into this is provided by statistics on ethnicities in Latvia in various years (see Table 1). We particularly want to emphasize the leap between the data from 1935 and 1959, when the proportion of Russians in Latvia increased from 8.8% to 26.6% (see grey-shaded fields in Table 1), meaning they came to constitute more than a quarter of Latvia's population. Moreover, the primary language for immigrants of other ethnicities (Belarussians, Ukrainians, etc.) in Latvia was Russian. This inevitably altered Latvia's linguistic and anthroponymic landscape, including the range of



personal names heard, read, and used in daily conversations. This was most pronounced in Latvia's larger cities and in the eastern part of Latvia—Latgale, where there was already a historically higher proportion of various Slavic languages, but less so in rural regions, especially in the western part of Latvia.

For example, while the ten most popular male names in the late 1930s and early 1940s were: *Jānis*, *Pēteris*, *Juris*, *Andris*, *Gunārs*, *Imants*, *Kārlis*, *Aivars*, *Aleksandrs*, and *Ivars* (all Latvian traditional names, mostly international names of different origin), in the late 1950s and early 1960s the top 10 changed: *Jānis*, *Aivars*, *Aleksandrs*, *Andris*, *Juris*, *Sergejs*, *Vladimirs*, *Viktors*, *Igors*, and *Jurijs*. Thus, half of these names are typical Slavic (Russian) given names in Latvian spelling, which previously were much less common in Latvia.

Figure 3 illustrates the dominance of Slavic names during the Soviet period 1945–1990. Between 1962 and 1967, among the top 20 boys' names, seven are distinctly Slavic names: *Igors*, *Sergejs*, *Jurijs*, *Vladimirs*, *Oļegs*, *Valērijs*, with only the given name *Aleksandrs* being common in other languages as well. The dynamics show that most of these names rapidly gained popularity in the mid-1940s and remained popular throughout the Soviet era until the late 20th century. Additionally, the names *Andrejs* and *Viktors*, which are also favourite in Slavic languages, were given in Latvia to boys of various other ethnicities (Latvians among them), so they are not included in Figure 3.

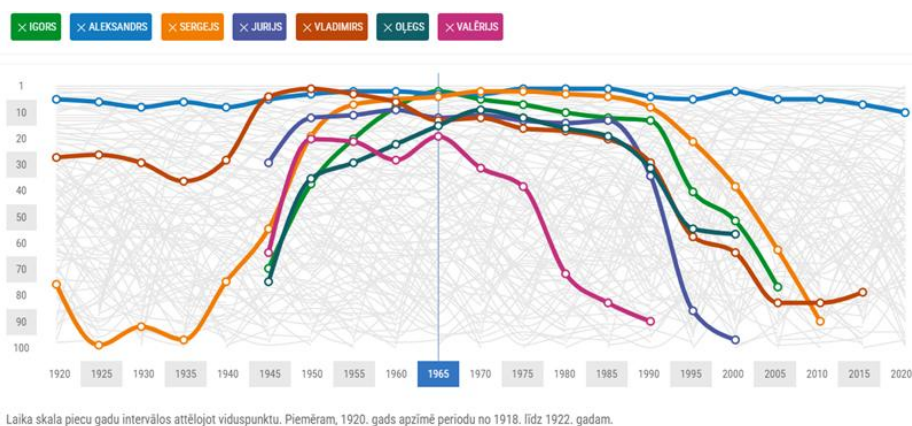


Figure 3. *The dominance of Slavic names 1945–1990. Data: CSB.*

Since each personal name is unique, their graphic differences, or spellings are separate names. When rendering names written in Russian into Latvian, competing variants often appeared. This reduces the true prevalence of a given name in such statistical compilations. A great example of such given names is name variants *Jevgeņijs*, *Jevgenijs*, and *Jevgēnijs* (cf. Russ. *Евгений*) (see



Figure 4), each of which was not very popular individually during this period, but collectively, for instance in the 1980s, they might have been the most common male names in Latvia. With these examples, one can also illustrate the previously mentioned regional differences by showing the distribution of the different variants of the name *Jevgeņijs* in Latgale (eastern Latvia, where this name was known in many variants until the beginning of this millennium) and Vidzeme (northern part of Latvia, where the name *Jevgeņijs* was very rare, only in the years of 1950–1955) in Figures 5 and 6.

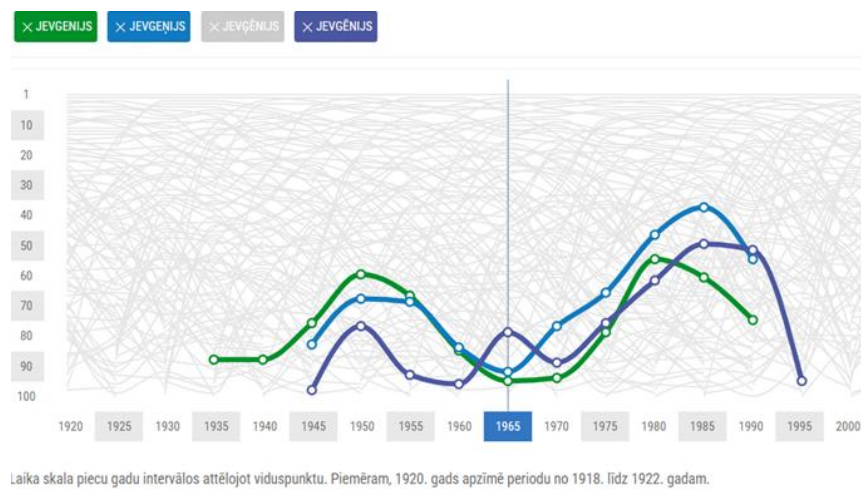


Figure 4. *Jevgeņijs, Jevgeņijs, Jevģēnijs (Russ. Евгений). Data: CSB.*

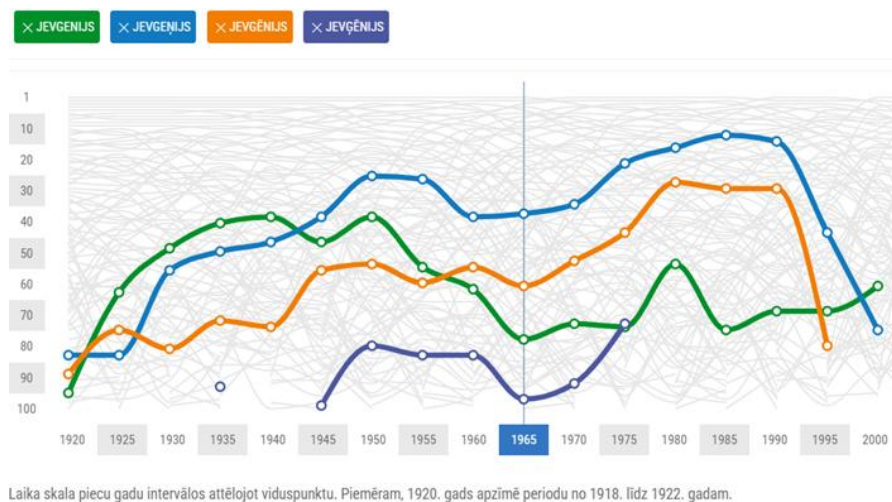


Figure 5. *Jevgeņijs and variants: popularity in Latgale. Data: CSB.*



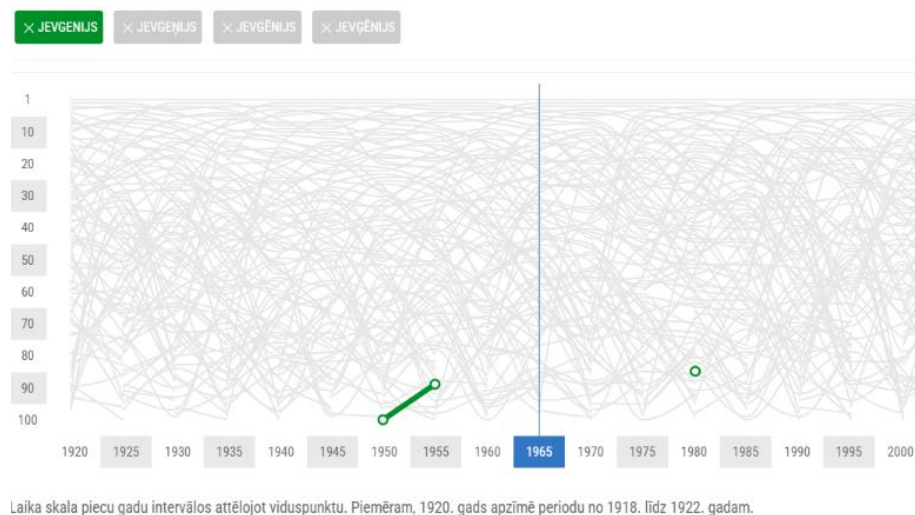


Figure 6. Jevgeņijs: *popularity in Vidzeme. Data: CSB.*

All these changes are related to changes in the composition of the population. Although there are no statistics on the popularity of names by ethnicity for this time, the differences by region allow this statement to be made confidently. An example that confirms this is the table (see Table 2) with top 20 names of women in the 1960s in Latvia as a whole, as well in the capital Riga, in Latgale, Zemgale (where there is a strong influence from Riga), and in the regions with the highest Latvian ethnicity—Kurzeme and Vidzeme. In Table 2, highlighted in grey, are typical Slavic names, while those in white are names most likely given to Latvians or girls of other ethnicities. As seen, in Vidzeme (northern Latvia), among the Top 20 girls' names, there is only one Slavic name, *Svetlana*, whereas in Latgale (eastern Latvia) and in Riga, more than half (12) are Slavic. In addition, the five first most popular names in Riga are typical Russian names: *Jeļena*, *Svetlana*, *Tatjana*, *Irina*, *Marina*. Thus, Table 2 indicates that in Latvia, there were two parallel naming systems with different percentages in each region. Furthermore, the spectrum of Slavic (Russian?) typical names is relatively uniform, repeating, and thus with greater frequency, while the range of Latvian names is broader and more dispersed. Whether this “parallel reality” continues in the present day will be discussed a bit later.

Such political developments promoted the persistence of Latvian personal names. Through Soviet times, given names partially manifested as a declaration of Latvian identity. Earlier researchers (LAWSON–BALODE 1998: 248, 249), while analyzing Latvian names from the Soviet era, also came to a similar conclusion: “an increase of Latvian names under Russian occupation”, and “the naming of children can represent a demonstration of political and ethnic



identity even under repression”. Analysis of newborn names of this period clearly testifies the attempt to preserve Latvian identity in personal names: it was a mark of resistance, one of the forms of struggle against the occupation.

Latvia	Rīga	Latgale	Zemgale	Kurzeme	Vidzeme
Svetlana	Jeļena	Svetlana	Sandra	Sandra	Inese
Jeļena	Svetlana	Tatjana	Inese	Inga	Sandra
Sandra	Tatjana	Ināra	Svetlana	Daiga	Iveta
Inese	Irina	Jeļena	Iveta	Iveta	Inga
Iveta	Marina	Valentīna	Inga	Inese	Ilze
Tatjana	Sandra	Olga	Anita	Dace	Daiga
Inga	Iveta	Ludmila	Daiga	Inta	Dace
Irina	Inese	Anita	Sarmīte	Svetlana	Anita
Anita	Inga	Anna	Dace	Anita	Līga
Dace	Nataļja	Irēna	Ilze	Ineta	Sarmīte
Daiga	Olga	Alla	Jeļena	Jeļena	Svetlana
Ināra	Žanna	Žanna	Tatjana	Aija	Aija
Ilze	Larisa	Inese	Irina	Irina	Ineta
Marina	Ludmila	Larisa	Aija	Ilze	Antra
Olga	Ilona	Irina	Ina	Sarmīte	Gunta
Larisa	Alla	Nataļja	Valentīna	Gunta	Inita
Ludmila	Dace	Vija	Inta	Antra	Vita
Aija	Ilze	Marija	Gunta	Inguna	Ilona
Valentīna	Inna	Galina	Ludmila	Tatjana	Ingrīda
Ilona	Ināra	Rita	Inita	Gita	Inguna

Table 2. Top 20 women names in Latvia overall and in its regions (1962–1967). Data: PMLP.¹

5. What Happens When (Almost) Everything is Allowed

The third and final aspect we will address in this article is the most recent period, time of the second independence of Latvia from the year 1990. Here, we observed two main trends: 1) a return to classic values from the early 20th century and 2) the influx of popular international names, predominantly in

¹ Cells shaded in grey indicate typical Slavic names; given names in bold are the only ones that are found in all columns, i. e., they appear among the most popular in all regions.



Anglicized forms. We would also like to touch upon the topic of personal names among Latvians and residents of other ethnicities in Latvia.

Examining the development trends of the top 10 boys' and girls' names over the years 2018–2022 (see Figure 7 and 8), we see that only few names (*Kārlis*, *Roberts*, and *Anna*) have been consistently popular throughout the 100-year period. The first name *Jānis*, with its long tradition, is still the most popular nowadays when considering all generations of Latvians, however, more recently, *Jānis* was no longer counted in the top 10 list of names for newborns (BALODE 2023: 23, 37–38; BALODE 2022; BUŠS 2004). Among girls' names, there is a more pronounced return to the names favoured by previous generations—*Sofija*, *Emīlija*, *Marta*, *Emma*, *Alise*—while for boys, only *Jēkabs* fits this pattern. Boys' names feature many new or previously much less common names, such as *Olivers*, *Marks*, *Gustavs*, *Emīls*, *Markuss*, *Adriāns*, while for girls, the new entries or names that were less often given to children are *Amēlija*, *Paula*, *Elizabete*, *Dārta*. Of course, these are just examples from the top 10, but the same trends are also evident in the names within the second top 10 in popularity.

As previously mentioned, in recent years, there has been a characteristic arrival, or influx of new names—popular and fashionable international names, mainly of English origin—adapted to Latvian language and using Latvian spelling. These are examples registered in the top 200 list (2018–2022) of newborns: *Braiens*, *Dilans*, *Kevins*, *Maikls*, *Raiens*; *Amina*, *Denīze*, *Džesika*, *Eimija*, *Emija*, *Heilija*, *Keita*, *Keitija*, *Ketija*, *Ketlīna*, *Kintija*, *Kitija*, *Megija*, *Mišela*, *Reičela*, etc.

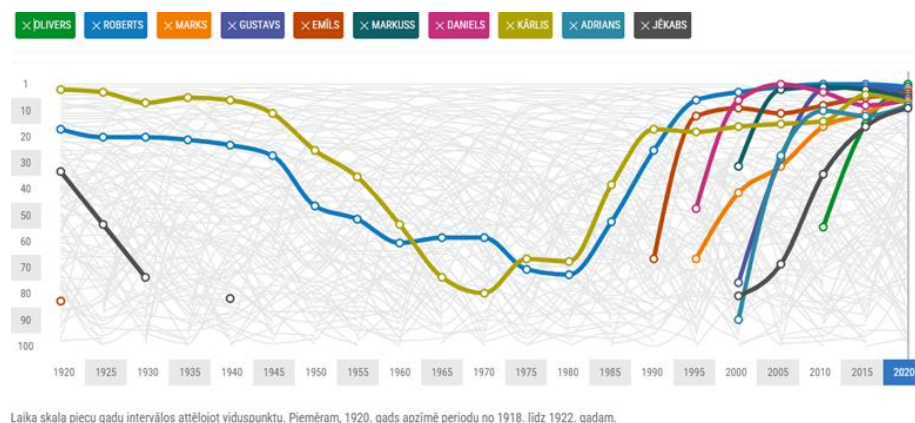


Figure 7. Top 10 boys' names 2018–2022. Data: CSB.



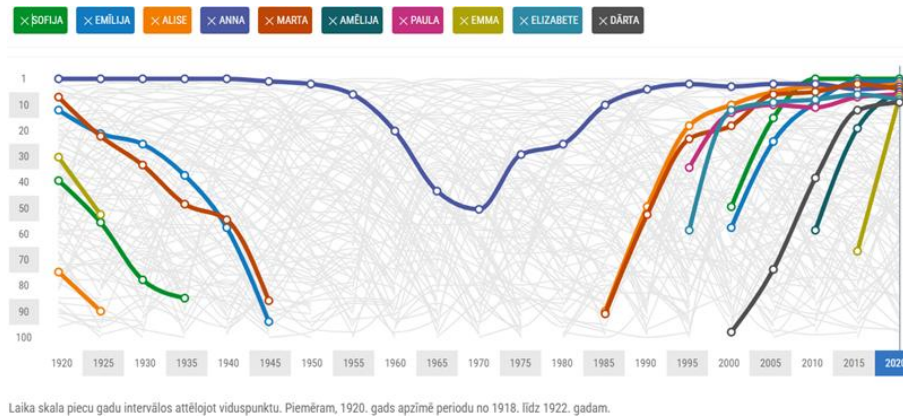


Figure 8. Top 10 girls' names 2018–2022. Data: CSB.

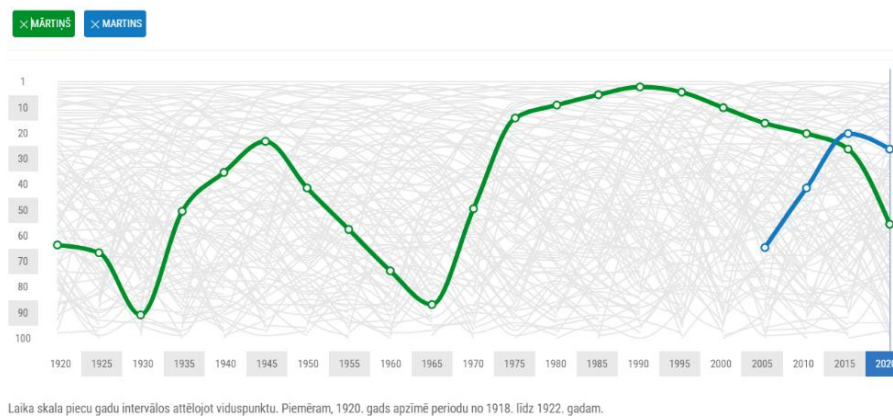


Figure 9. The competition of classical names with their English forms: Mārtiņš vs Martins. Data: CSB.

There is also a trend of classical names competing with their Anglicized forms, such as *Mārtiņš* vs *Martins*, *Rihards* vs *Ričards*, *Kate* vs *Keita* (see Figures 9, 10 and 11). For example, the traditional Latvian name *Mārtiņš* (with three diacritical marks; name recorded in the 17th century), and a rather new name (without diacritics) *Martins* (cf. English form *Martin*; in Latvia is spread likely with much credit to the skeleton racer, world champion Martins Dukurs). Similar examples of such male name pairs are *Rihards* and *Ričards* (cf. English pronunciation of male form *Richard*), *Aleksis* and *Alekss* (cf. English pronunciation of male form *Alex*). However, this trend of parallel pairs is less pronounced among girls, for instance, *Kate* and *Keita* (an example of pairs from Kurzeme): *Kate* is the old Latvian hypocoristic from Latv. *Katrīna* < German *Katharina*, but the name *Keita* (cf. English pronunciation of *Kate*) most



probably came to Latvia from United Kingdom; the Princess of Wales has certainly contributed to its popularity over the past 10–15 years. However, the Latvian name *Keita* had already been in the top 100 for 10 years before the royal wedding, so some popular figures from the world of cinema (such as Kate Hudson, Kate Moss, Kate Winslet, etc.) have also influenced the choice of given names in Latvian families.

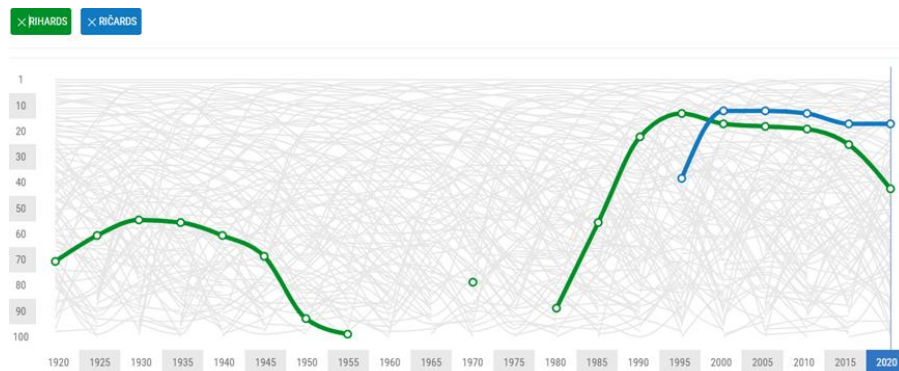


Figure 10. *The competition of classical names with their English forms: Rihards vs Ričards. Data: CSB.*



Figure 11. *The competition of classical names with their English forms: Kate vs Keita. Data: CSB.*

Finally, let us return to the question of the parallel existence of name realities among different ethnicities of Latvian citizens. Do they still persist today? In order to clarify this question, we compared the 20 most popular given names of Latvians and non-Latvians as a whole (i.e., citizens of all ages and all generations) with the 20 most popular names of young people (girls and boys) born in the last 20 years (see Tables 3 and 4).



The comparison shows that the range of favourite names changes for all in general. A dark background is for names that are popular both in the group as a whole and for young people. However, the most significant changes can be seen in the top names for Latvian women and girls: out of the 20 most popular women's names, only three—*Marta*, *Laura*, and *Anna*—are found in the current top 20 list of young generation. The most conservative part in this regard are non-Latvian boys' names—half of the boys' names match the list of men's names.

Top No	Names of non-Latvians	Names of non-Latvian boys	Names of Latvians	Names of Latvian boys
1	Aleksandrs	Maksims	Jānis	Roberts
2	Sergejs	Aleksandrs	Andris	Markuss
3	Andrejs	Artjoms	Edgars	Ralfs
4	Dmitrijs	Daniels	Juris	Gustavs
5	Vladimirs	Nikita	Mārtiņš	Emīls
6	Aleksejs	Daniils	Māris	Daniels
7	Igors	Marks	Artūrs	Kārlis
8	Maksims	Iļja	Aivars	Jānis
9	Viktors	Timurs	Roberts	Kristers
10	Jurijs	Dmitrijs	Kaspars	Artūrs
11	Oļegs	Mihails	Kristaps	Adriāns
12	Mihails	Aleksejs	Kārlis	Ričards
13	Artjoms	Andrejs	Ivars	Toms
14	Nikolajs	Nikita	Aigars	Kristaps
15	Vladislavs	Deniss	Pēteris	Olivers
16	Deniss	Vladislavs	Andrejs	Ernests
17	Vadims	Kirils	Uldis	Jēkabs
18	Vitālijs	Jegors	Oskars	Mārtiņš
19	Pāvels	Ivans	Valdis	Rihards
20	Ivans	Artūrs	Raimonds	Matīss

Table 3. 20 most popular men's given names of Latvians and non-Latvians and 20 most popular boys' names born in the last 20 years. Data: PMLP.²

² Cells shaded in grey show common names in men's and boys' lists—separately for non-Latvians and Latvians—whereas given names in bold indicate those that are common to both given names for non-Latvian and Latvian men, and separately, for non-Latvian and Latvian boys.



But what about the differences between Latvians and non-Latvians (see Tables 3 and 4 in bold)? For Latvian and non-Latvian men, there is only one common name: *Andrejs*; for Latvian and non-Latvian boys, there are two common names: *Daniels* and *Artūrs*. Among Latvian and non-Latvian women, there are no common names; however, among Latvian and non-Latvian girls, there are the largest number—five—common names: *Alise*, *Anna*, *Sofija*, *Viktorija*, and *Nikola*.

Top No	Names of non-Latvians	Names of non-Latvian girls	Names of Latvians	Names of Latvian girls
1	Jeļena	Anastasija	Kristīne	Marta
2	Tatjana	Sofija	Inese	Alise
3	Svetlana	Viktorija	Ilze	Emīlija
4	Olga	Anna	Inga	Paula
5	Irina	Marija	Anna	Elizabete
6	Anna	Darja	Līga	Evelīna
7	Anastasija	Ksenija	Dace	Katrīna
8	Natalja	Milana	Ieva	Laura
9	Ludmila	Aleksandra	Laura	Anna
10	Viktorija	Veronika	Anita	Sofija
11	Marija	Alisa	Iveta	Estere
12	Jūlija	Arina	Sandra	Madara
13	Jekaterina	Jekaterina	Linda	Amanda
14	Marina	Alise	Elīna	Elza
15	Valentīna	Valērija	Aija	Samanta
16	Natālija	Jeļizaveta	Baiba	Viktorija
17	Nadežda	Nikola	Marta	Keita
18	Aleksandra	Polina	Ināra	Elīza
19	Gaļina	Polina	Agnese	Patrīcija
20	Larisa	Valerija	Diāna	Nikola

Table 4. 20 most popular women's given names of Latvians and non-Latvians and 20 most popular girls' names born in the last 20 years. Data: PMLP).³



³ Cells shaded in grey show common names in women's and in girls' lists—separately for non-Latvians and Latvians—whereas given names in bold indicate those that are common to both non-Latvian and Latvian girls.

Therefore, it can be said that there is a rapprochement between the worlds of Latvian and non-Latvian personal names. There were more differences in women's names, but they have converged more rapidly in recent decades. On the other hand, the range of the most popular male names is more static.

6. Conclusions

The collection of personal names is constantly changing, influenced by both external and internal processes that can either promote or hinder these changes. In 20th-century Latvia, the most significant factors influencing names are:

1. The trend of giving Latvian names in the 1920s and 1930s: analysis reveals a trend of giving Latvian names that peaked in the 1920s and 1930s, as part of the process of forming national identity and culture. This trend aligns with similar processes elsewhere in Europe, where, under the influence of Romanticism in the 19th century, names of national origin were popularized.
2. The impact of Soviet occupation: significant dynamics in personal names emerged, influenced by Russification policies and considerable changes in the ethnic composition of the population. The increase in Slavic-origin names in the list of Latvian personal names is clearly visible from the 1940s to the 1980s, especially in larger cities and Latgale. This demonstrates that political and social conditions had a substantial impact on the linguistic and cultural environment in Latvia.
3. The return to classical names and the influx of new names after regaining independence after 1991: there was a noticeable return to traditional Latvian names, along with the introduction of international names, particularly an increase in the number of Anglicisms. This shows the global influence on local culture and personal name choices in contrasting expressions.
4. The trend towards the convergence of Latvian and non-Latvian anthroponymy in recent decades: this can be linked to cultural and linguistic interactions, globalization, and possibly the integration of Latvian society.

Analyzing these processes helps to understand not only the historical development of Latvian personal names but also broader cultural, historical, and political processes in modern times. For example, if previously fashion trends and changes mainly affected girls' names, now we see more dynamic changes in boys' names as well, particularly among Latvians (to a lesser extent among other ethnic groups in Latvia).



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Abstract

The anthroponymic material and analysis presented in this article, based on the forthcoming Dictionary of Latvian Given Names, highlights trends in given names over the past 100 years, examining their diversity within the context of Latvian history. Research employed etymological, statistical, and comparative methodologies.

Analysing trends in the personal names of Latvian citizens, various historical and cultural factors should be taken into account. Most pronounced trends in the mirror of identity are reviewed and described in 3 periods: 1) 1920s and 1930s; 2) Soviet period (from 1940s to 1990s); 3) time of the second Independence (from 1990). For instance, during Latvia's first independence in the 20th century, names based on Latvian appellatives were coined, fuelled by national romanticism known in almost all countries in Europe.

Another significant aspect is the change in the ethnic composition of the population, which was the impact of Soviet occupation. The increase in Slavic-origin anthroponyms in the list of Latvian personal names is clearly visible from the 1940s to the 1980s, especially in larger cities and the eastern region, Latgale. This demonstrates that political and social conditions had a substantial impact on the linguistic and cultural environment in Latvia. Political dynamics influenced Latvian naming: Soviet-era names echoed Latvian identity, but after the restoration of independence fashion in given names changed rapidly. Recent naming trends highlight two aspects: first of all, a return to classical values, traditional Latvian names reminiscent of the early 20th century; secondly, the arrival of popular international names, often in their English-form, dropping the diacritical marks.

Keywords: onomastics, Latvian anthroponymy, given names, identity

