

‘Messiah’ Is Increasingly Popular as Name for US Boys

Sophia tops the list of names for American baby girls for the second year in a row, while King and Messiah are becoming increasingly popular names for boys, the U.S. Social Security Administration said on Thursday.

Jacob has become a standby for boys' names, topping that category for the 14th straight year. Liam and Elizabeth broke into the Top 10 at No. 6 and No. 10 respectively, the SSA said in a statement.

But rising on the list are a couple of less traditional, but more attention-grabbing names. Messiah was the fourth fastest-growing name for boys, rising to 387th in 2012 from the 633th spot in 2011, according to the federal agency.

King became the seventh fastest-growing boy's name, reaching the 256th most popular spot in 2012, compared with 389th the year before, the agency said.

"Bold names for boys are very hot right now," said Laura Wattenberg, creator of the website .

"So for people who are appalled by the idea, most of us are not appalled by names like Emmanuel, which is very common today, and it wasn't that long ago that the name Emmanuel was shocking to a lot of people," she said.

That is partly because a passage in the Bible's book of Matthew links the ancient Israelite name to Jesus Christ, which Wattenberg said was seen in the past as too jarring an allusion for a baby name.

The name Major ranked as the fastest-growing boy's name on the SSA list, jumping to 483rd most popular in 2012 from 988th in

2011.

"I have no doubt Major's rising popularity as a boy's name is in tribute to the brave members of the U.S. military, and maybe we'll see more boys named General in the future," Carolyn Colvin, acting commissioner of the SSA, said in a statement.

For girls, the fastest-growing name was Cataleya, Wattenberg said. It jumped to 479th in 2012 from 1,680 the previous year, she said, adding that could be attributed to actress Zoe Saldana playing an alluring assassin with that name in the 2011 film *Colombiana*.

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