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# **Are Traditional Bulgarian Names Still Prestigious at the Beginning of the 21st Century? A Survey on Contemporary Bulgarian Baby Names**

## Abstract

It has been argued that in modern Bulgarian society, two specific groups of names are considered prestigious – those borrowed from a foreign language and a small number of names recognized as old, historical names, believed to be “genuine Bulgarian names” (Konstantinov, 1987). In addition, a certain share of traditional Bulgarian names are regarded as non-prestigious: those that are connected to Bulgarian folk traditions and beliefs. However, naming patterns in Bulgaria are still quite conservative. According to recent empirical studies on motives for name giving, commemorative naming remains the leading practice among Bulgarians. Considering this contradiction, the present study aims to investigate how popular some traditional Bulgarian names have been in the first two decades of the 21st century. More precisely, it focuses on a particular group of names – defined as “domestic” ones – Bulgarian in their origins and related to folk traditions, e.g., *Denitsa*, *Radka*, *Svetlozara*; *Radostin*, *Zdravko*, *Miroslav*, etc. Special emphasis is placed on analyzing the frequency of different name formation types and formants. This enables the identification of the most preferred names, on the one hand, and of the formation types still productive in the contemporary Bulgarian anthroponomasticon, on the other. Finally, some important inferences are made about the prestige those names have in modern Bulgarian society.

## Keywords

first names, Bulgarian, traditional, domestic, name frequency

## 1. Sociocultural changes and the dynamics of fashion in personal names in Bulgaria

It is well known that changes in culture lead to changes in naming patterns, as well as to alterations in the choice of names itself (Krasteva-Blagoeva, 1999; Lieberson, 2000; Gerhards, 2005; Lawson, 2016; Gerhards & Hackenbroch, 2020). According to S. Lieberson and F. Lynn (2003), “in the latter part of the 19th century, names chosen for children began a gradual shift from being matters of tradition and other conventions to being matters of fashion and taste” (p. 235). To this day, there is already a great deal of research that shows how tastes in naming follow sociocultural changes in societies in different parts of the world (Lieberson, 2000; Caffarelli & Gerritzen, 2002; Lieberson & Lynn, 2003; Gerhards, 2005; Luján-García, 2015; Sabet & Zhang, 2020; Hussar, 2021). Bulgaria is no exception to these processes. The modernization of Bulgarian society is a continuous process. Despite consensus over its time limits, there is considerable disagreement about the results it has produced. Some researchers state that the modernization reached its peak in the middle of the 20th century, after the establishment of the socialist regime (Prodanov, 2004; Penchev, 2009), while others argue it never successfully ended (Gruev, 2009). Here, however, the processes of transformation from a conservative and to a large degree agrarian society into a modern society were imposed “from above” (Rot, 1997; Prodanov, 2004; Gruev, 2009), this being accompanied by a deliberate policy of imposing the new socialistic ritualism and celebrations and struggle against remnants of the past, including religion and the celebration of religious holidays, as well as the performance of customs and traditions with religious content (Gruev, 2009; Kotsev, 2017). As a result, not only did the ritualism connected with names and the act of christening change (for details on this topic, see Krasteva-Blagoeva, 1999), but as a consequence of the changes in people’s aesthetic views and the restrictions placed on the choice of personal names, the stock of Bulgarian personal names palpably began to change. Thus, after the 1950s, a large part of the most widespread names during that century lost their prestige because they became identified with “the village”. Simultaneously, the most widespread motive for the choice of names among Bulgarians remained (even until this day!) the commemoration of a grandparent, as empirical studies have shown (Kalkanova, 2004; Yanev, 2009; Levkova, 2019). This contradiction between modernizing

and conservative tendencies in Bulgarian societal values also resonates in the sphere of naming and is connected with the tendency of the names of the grandparents both to be preserved and continued through their grandchildren and to be modernized (sometimes beyond recognition). The emergence of so-called hybrid (contaminated) names,<sup>1</sup> (e.g., *Mirodin*, m. a kind of blend coined from *Miro*, m. and *Miladin*, m. [Konduktorova-Valkanova, 1982, p. 22]), and special commemorative names starting with the same letter that starts a grandparent's name,<sup>2</sup> are a feature of the Bulgarian naming system in the second half of the 20th century, and an expression of reconciliation between the aspiration for modernity and loyalty to tradition (Konstantinov, 1987).

Frequency dictionaries and statistical studies<sup>3</sup> from the end of the 20th century (Kovachev, 1987, 1995; Angelova-Atanasova, 2001) attest to the changes in the stock of anthroponyms, as well as to which traditional names are gaining in popularity and which are dying. It must be noted that the dynamics in the development of some personal names over the decades are varied, and their peaks and troughs can easily be connected with important social, political, and cultural changes.

The sociopolitical changes at the end of the 1980s led to an updating of the value opposition of collectivism/individualism expressing the relationship between the individual and the group in society (Baychinska, 2002); a number of theoretical and empirical studies show that during this transitional period, the attitude of Bulgarian culture to traditional and new values was internally contradictory (Baychinska, 1996, 1999, 2000; Rot, 1997). During the 1990s, the lifting of restrictions on the choice of personal names, free communication with the outside world, and most of all, the idea of freedom of the individual and their personal desires were also a new impetus for changes in the Bulgarian naming system, which were expressed in the growth of foreign first names and foreign language variants of established names (Choleva-Dimitrova, 2002; Kalkanova, 2004; Bankova, 2008).

In the most recent period, especially after Bulgaria's entry into the EU, these processes continue to be underway even more intensively, and everything

<sup>1</sup> These are names formed by the combination of two names, whether of both grandmothers, both grandfathers, or the grandmother and grandfather.

<sup>2</sup> This is a widely spread naming pattern in the second part of the 20th century. For instance, a child is named *Kamen* after his grandfather *Krum*.

<sup>3</sup> Bulgarian onomastics has statistical data about personal names available for the period from 1890 on.

that we designate as globalism today leads to more substantial changes in the motives for the choice of personal names. Today, the aesthetic considerations of Bulgarians are crucial in the naming process (Yanev, 2009; Levkova, 2019), and a “beautiful name” is most often the motive indicated for the choice of a given forename (Virkkula, 2014). This is obviously a global phenomenon, reflected in the fashion in personal names, the overall sound of which plays an increasingly larger role in the development of their prestige (Gerritzen, 2005, p. 46; translation from German is mine). Similar processes are underway practically everywhere in the world, and they lead to uniform phenomena – for example, the borrowing of exotic names from unfamiliar cultures; an upsurge in unique names, often formed in similar ways and having a similar sound; and the internationalization of names (Leibring, 2016, p. 211).

## 2. Objective and research method

The modern state of Bulgarian personal names has lately been the object of intensive research, as well as of concern for the future of the Bulgarian anthroponomasticon, born of general concern for the fate of the Bulgarian language as a small language. The changes in the composition and form of personal names engenders fears that the Bulgarian anthroponomasticon is losing its individuality and its national specificity. This is one of the reasons for us to focus in the present study on names that could be defined as specifically Bulgarian to the greatest degree, and specifically, on domestic names constructed with domestic morphology and making up a significant portion of Bulgarian personal names historically. Only in this way will we be able to answer the question of whether these names really are disappearing, or if this is a fear merely because the emergence of new and heretofore unknown first names attracts attention and distorts the popular perception of the ongoing processes in the naming system today.

Figuring into the group of **traditional Bulgarian names** are anthroponyms of different origins, both domestic<sup>4</sup> names and those borrowed, mainly

<sup>4</sup> In the Bulgarian anthroponymic literature, **traditional names** are divided into: 1) *Domestic*: 1.1.) Inherited, common to all Slavs, and 1.2.) Names connected with folk tradition; 2) *Borrowed*: *calendar names*, connected with the Christian religion and church (Ilchev, 1969;

through the mediation of the Christian religion, which have been adapted and accepted by Bulgarians as “fundamentally Bulgarian”. As stated above, the present research is dedicated to names formed with bases that are domestic in their origins, for example: *rad-* ‘joy’, *dar-* ‘gift’, *mil-* ‘dear’, *tsvet-* ‘flower, colorful’, and others; remaining outside the scope of the present study are names formed on Bulgarian soil from borrowed names that have undergone a number of transformations, for example: *Penka* < *Pena* < *Peno* < *Petar*, etc. Special attention is given to name formation with the goal of establishing which domestic bases are still productive today, and which variations on names (with which suffixes) are preferred at the beginning of the 21st century.

The object of analysis is the official data<sup>5</sup> on names of newborns in eight of the largest Bulgarian cities<sup>6</sup>: Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Stara Zagora, Blagoevgrad, Rousse, Veliko Tarnovo, and Pleven. These cities were chosen because of the highest birth rates (NSI, n.d.); additionally, they are representative of all the administrative regions in the country. The names from 2008 and 2018 have been studied, as the goal is to trace the dynamics in naming fashions over the 10-year period immediately after Bulgaria’s admission into the EU.

The data in the corpora were analyzed and the names corresponding to the criteria in the study were extracted. The corpora were processed statistically, and the share of domestic names was calculated in comparison with the total aggregate of names of the newborns (taking into account names with at least three tokens), calculated separately for each sex, for each city, and for each of the years studied. The most frequent domestic names occupying the top three positions in the rankings for each sex, city, and year were determined. A structural analysis was made of the names, and the most commonly encountered types of domestic names were indicated, as well as the preferred suffixes. The productivity of domestic name bases was analyzed by extracting the forenames created from the same base (for some of the most productive bases rather than for all of them).

Kovachev, 1995); 3) *Historical names*, derived from Bulgarian history – mainly from leaders and aristocrats. All of these exist in their own numerous shortened and mutated forms and variations, described in detail in the literature (Vaygand, 1926; Ilchev, 1969; Zaimov, 1988; Kovachev, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> The data are provided by the National Statistical Institute especially for the needs of the project – 16 corpora in all, containing the names with at least 3 tokens. Single-token and two-token names were not provided because of the Personal Data Protection Regulation.

<sup>6</sup> All of these cities are simultaneously the largest economically, culturally, in terms of education, and are centers of tourism in the country.

### 3. Results and commentary

#### 3.1. Share of domestic names in the total aggregate of newborn names

Tables 1 and 2 contain data for children with names formed on domestic bases for both sexes in each separate corpus, as well as for the total share of domestic names for every city studied, considered together. The data show that approximately 20% of the names of newborns are domestic in origin, with there being no substantial change between the two years studied. This percentage will probably also remain approximately the same in comparison with the full list of names of newborns, since even among the names with one or two tokens, there will be quite a few domestic forenames, as seen in other name corpora.

**Table 1. Percentage of domestic male personal names (MPNs) and female personal names (FPNs) in the total number of children's names with more than 2 tokens**

City	Percentage of domestic names in 2008		Percentage of domestic names in 2018	
	FPNs	MPNs	FPNs	MPNs
Sofia	22.6	20.7	20.9	17.8
Plovdiv	18.6	17.7	23.4	15.7
Varna	21.6	20.3	23.1	18.2
Rousse	17.6	20.2	23.2	26.0
Veliko Tarnovo	16.2	7.9	17.6	14.7
Stara Zagora	20.9	21.4	14.3	18.3
Blagoevgrad	12.9	12.7	25.5	11.4
Pleven	19.5	27.0	19.9	19.1

Source: author's statistics based on NSI data.

**Table 2. Total share of names with domestic origins compared with newborn names with more than 2 tokens**

Year	Base (boys)	MPNs Number	% MPNs	Base (girls)	FPNs Number	% FPNs
2008	11630	2326	20.0	10249	2176	21.2
2018	10185	1803	17.7	9314	1988	21.3

Source: author's statistics based on NSI data.

### 3.2. The most frequent domestic names

From Table 3, it is clear which names of domestic origin are the most popular. For both the MPNs and the FPNs, there are clear favorites: **Bozhidar** and **Raya**, respectively. They maintain their popularity over this 10-year period, and they appear among the top three most frequent names of domestic origin both during 2008 and 2018 in almost all the cities studied. It should be noted that the female name *Raya* occupies a very prominent position – among the top 10 names in the total name ranking. In 2018, the forename *Raya* occupied fifth place among FPNs of newborns in the country, rising from ninth place, where it was in 2008 (NSI, 2019). The increase in the frequency of the name has been a smooth process that began more perceptibly in the middle of the 20th century, whereas the name had been very rarely encountered in the first half of the 20th century (Kovachev, 1987). In comparison, during the period of 1981–1990, the first name *Raya* is only in the 187th position in the ranking of newborn names (Angelova-Atanasova, 2001, p. 196). The name *Bozhidar* is also among the most frequent first names; although it does not enter the top ten, it does occupy a position in the first twenty in the overall ranking of newborn names, and moreover, it is notable for its quickly growing popularity that began at the end of the 20th century.



**Table 3. Most frequent names with domestic bases**

City	Rank	2008		2018	
		FPNs	MPNs	FPNs	MPNs
Sofia	1.	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>	<i>Dariya</i>	<i>Boyan</i>
	2.	<i>Kalina</i>	<i>Boyan</i>	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>
	3.	<i>Darina</i>	<i>Borislav</i>	<i>Kalina</i>	<i>Vladimir</i>
Plovdiv	1.	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>	<i>Dariya</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>
	2.	<i>Denitsa</i>	<i>Stoyan</i>	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Krasimir</i>
	3.	<i>Nadezhda</i>	<i>Krasimir</i>	<i>Bozhidara</i>	<i>Vladimir</i>
Varna	1.	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Borislav</i>
	2.	<i>Kalina</i>	<i>Boyan</i>	<i>Dariya</i>	<i>Vladimir</i>
	3.	<i>Denitsa</i>	<i>Vladimir</i>	<i>Plamena</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>
Rousse	1.	<i>Preslava</i>	<i>Preslav</i>	<i>Dariya</i>	<i>Preslav</i>
	2.	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Boyan</i>	<i>Siyana</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>
	3.	<i>Kalina</i>	<i>Borislav</i>	<i>Beloslava</i>	<i>Borislav</i>
Veliko Tarnovo	1.	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Denislav</i>	<i>Dariya</i>	<i>Preslav</i>
	2.	<i>Kalina</i>	<i>Plamen</i>	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Vladimir</i>
	3.	<i>Plamena</i>	<i>Preslav</i>	<i>Plamena</i>	<i>Boyan</i>
Stara Zagora	1.	<i>Denitsa</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>
	2.	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Plamen</i>	<i>Desislava</i>	<i>Vladimir</i>
	3.	<i>Siyana</i>	<i>Denislav</i>	<i>Bozhidara</i>	<i>Yavor</i>
Blagoevgrad	1.	<i>Tsvetelina</i>	<i>Borislav</i>	<i>Dariya</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>
	2.	<i>Bozhidara</i>	<i>Lyubomir</i>	<i>Bozhidara</i>	<i>Vladimir</i>
	3.	<i>Snezhana</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Denislav</i>
Pleven	1.	<i>Preslava</i>	<i>Denislav</i>	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>
	2.	<i>Raya</i>	<i>Tsvetomir</i>	<i>Beloslava</i>	<i>Vladimir</i>
	3.	<i>Krasimira</i>	<i>Bozhidar</i>	<i>Borislava</i>	<i>Stanislav</i>

Source: author's statistics based on NSI data.

The analyses also show that in the 10-year period studied, two names have been gaining significant popularity: the female name *Dariya* (which is found among the three most popular domestic names in five of the eight cities)

and the male name *Vladimir* (among the three most popular names in seven out of eight cities). *Vladimir* was a very familiar name already in the People's Republic of Bulgaria, with a high frequency, but the emergence of *Dariya*, and at such a high position, is a completely new phenomenon. In 2018, *Dariya* was in seventh place in the overall ranking of FPNs in the country, rising from 48th in 2008 (NSI, 2019). For comparison, in the period from 1981–1990, the personal name *Dariya* was all the way down in 417th place among names of newborns (Angelova-Atanasova, 2001, p. 209).

Observation of the dynamics of the most preferred names with domestic origins further shows that one name, *Kalina*, lost its position in 2018. It fell from the top three, absent from the top three most popular domestic names in all studied cities in 2018, whereas in 2008, it was among the most popular names in four cities (Sofia, Varna, Rousse, and Veliko Tarnovo).

On the whole, it is obvious that the list of the most preferred names of domestic origin at the beginning of the 21st century differs significantly from that at the end of the 20th century. It is important to note that some of the names popular in the last century have today completely disappeared from the list of newborn names, or have become marginalized (for example, *Lyuben*, *Nadezhda*, *Rayna*, *Radka*, *Tsvetan*, *Tsvetanka*) and have been replaced by more modern-sounding<sup>7</sup> variants, such as *Lyuboslav*, *Raya*, *Radina*, *Tsvetomir*, and *Tsvetina*. Among FPNs, there is almost no continuity, and the selection of the most frequent domestic names today is entirely new. Among MPNs, a certain continuity is registered, with four names – *Krasimir*, *Vladimir*, *Borislav*, and *Plamen* – maintaining their popularity over a continuous period<sup>8</sup> of time and still considered prestigious.

### 3.3. Structural types of domestic names

Regarding the word-formation types of domestic names, the analyses of the corpora indicate that the share of dithematic names has remained almost unchanged compared to the period from 1981–1990, the earliest period for

<sup>7</sup> Names formed with foreign language suffixes borrowed from English, French and Italian are considered to be modern sounding. This applies especially to the FPN (Radeva, 2019, p. 35).

<sup>8</sup> These forenames fall among the first 40 most popular names in the period from 1890–1970 (Kovachev, 1987, p. 196), as well as among the top 25 for the 1981–1990 period (Angelova-Atanasova, 2001).

which data are published (Angelova-Atanasova, 2001, p. 102). Likewise, today there is also a significant difference in the proportion of simple and composite names in the two sexes (see Tables 3 and 4). In FPNs, simple names formed with suffixes predominate, whereas in MPNs, the share of two-root domestic names<sup>9</sup> is significantly larger, making up more than 50% of the number of domestic names in almost all corpora, even reaching 90% in places. Among the simple names (both in MPNs and FPNs), a categorical preponderance of those formed by suffixation is observed. Only one simple forename formed through prefixation in its male and female versions is registered: *Preslav(a)*.<sup>10</sup> The use of these two names began to increase in frequency only in the period from 1980–1990 – *Preslav* (196th place) and *Preslava* (276th place), in order to reach these high rankings today.

**Table 4. Share of dithematic names with domestic roots compared with the overall number of names with domestic roots**

City	Percentage of dithematic names in 2008		Percentage of dithematic names in 2018	
	FPNs	MPNs	FPNs	MPNs
Sofia	16.18	52.83	12.31	48.71
Plovdiv	13.96	55.19	11.11	57.81
Varna	12.90	41.02	9.30	52.45
Rousse	6.84	61.81	21.73	26.80
Veliko Tarnovo	10.34	47.05	13.04	58.62
Stara Zagora	3.57	55.20	2.98	58.82
Blagoevgrad	2.16	82.85	3.16	90.32
Pleven	3.62	65.74	2.97	82.22
Average percentage	8.69	57.71	9.57	59.43

Source: author's statistics based on NSI data.

<sup>9</sup> Angelova-Atanasova (2001, p. 100) asserts a similar trend.

<sup>10</sup> The male variant of this anthroponym is ancient, dating from before the 9th century (Zaimov, 1988), but until the 1970s, it was extremely rare (Kovachev, 1995).

The data show that the most frequently preferred dithematic names in 2008 and 2018 were **Bozhidar** and **Bozhidara** (see Table 3; for more detail, see Vlahova-Angelova, 2021), these being found in almost all the corpora studied and often having the greatest number of uses of all domestic names. Besides these, among the dithematic forenames, names with a **second constituent** of **-slav(a)** or **-mir(a)** clearly predominate – for example, the MPNs *Borislav*, *Vladimir*, *Denislav*, *Lyubomir*, *Krasimir*, *Radoslav*, and *Stanislav*, and the FPNs *Beloslava*, *Borislava*, *Vladimira*, *Lyubomira*, *Krasimira*, *Radoslava*, and the like. This trend was registered as early as the 1980s (Angelova-Atanasova, 2001, pp. 101–103). First names with a second component in *-zar(a)* are encountered much more rarely – *Velizar(a)*, *Lachezar(a)*, *Svetlozar* – as are names in *-mil*: *Bogomil*, *Lyudmil*. Ancient forenames or neoanthroponyms (hybrid names) are not among the composite names found in the corpora.

**Table 5. Selected examples of simple domestic names according to their frequency of use**

Frequency	FPNs	MPNs
over 50% of the corpora	<i>Darina, Dariya, Denitsa, Elitsa, Kalina, Plamena, Ralitsa, Raya, Siana/Siyana, Tsvetelina, Zornitsa</i>	<i>Boyan, Deyan/Dean, Kamen, Momchil, Ogyan, Plamen, Preslav, Radostin, Rosen, Rumen, Slavi, Stoyan, Yasen, Yavor</i>
under 50% of the corpora	<i>Bilyana, Boryana, Nevena, Radina, Radost, Snezhana, Tsvetina, Zara</i>	<i>Vihren, Kalin, Zdravko, Zhivko</i>
in 1 corpus	<i>Divna, Radka, Rayana, Trayana, Trayanka</i>	<i>Kalcho, Rashko, Raycho, Slavcho, Stoycho</i>

Source: author's statistics based on NSI data.

### 3.4. The frequency of traditional suffixes for the formation of names with a domestic root

Regarding the frequency of the most commonly encountered traditional suffixes for forming names from domestic roots, the results are not surprising. They confirm well the familiar trend of avoiding certain suffixes such as *k(a/o)*, *yo*, and *ch(o)*, which began back in the last quarter of the 20th century. The data from both years studied are comparable; that is, the trends coincide, but because of the smaller number of children born in 2018, their numbers are smaller. The observations show that traditional suffixes

predominate, with *ina* and *en* being the most prevalent suffixes for FPNs and MPNs, respectively.

The corpora also contain forenames formed with a few more contemporary affixes and “modern” name forms resembling a number of foreign names. Similar examples such as *Darian* (with a higher frequency than the traditional *Darin*) have been recorded in a number of first names: *Velian*, *Delian*, *Ivian*, *Krastian*, *Petrian*, *Stalian*, *Radostian*,<sup>11</sup> and similar, which are modernized variations of traditional names. They do not, however, always fall within the scope of research, since they are rarely used. This phenomenon is even more widespread among FPNs, for example: *Dariana*, *Biliana*, *Vesiana*, *Lilian*, *Spasiana*, and so on.

A detailed examination of the data and their comparison with the earlier stage from the end of the 20th century shows that there has been a replacement of some traditionally-formed names with others. This is especially clear with FPNs, where some of the names that were very current in the 1980s and 1990s have begun to lose their prestige little by little and to be replaced by others. For example, *Tsvetelina* is competing with *Tsvetina*, *Milena* with *Militsa*, *Radostina* with *Radina*. It should further be noted that there is at hand a distinct tendency to prefer shortened forms of FPNs, formed without suffixes, such as *Zara*, *Mila*, *Mira*, *Neda*, *Rada*, and *Tsveta* instead of *Zarina*, *Milka*, *Miryana*, *Nedka*, *Radka*, *Tsvetana*, and similar.

### 3.5. Popularity of domestic name roots

Regarding the share of domestic name stems at the beginning of the 21st century, as can be seen, three name stems have a greater share among both MPNs and FPNs: ***bog-*** ‘god’, ***vlad-*** ‘rule, ruler’, ***rad-*** ‘joy’, exceeding 1% (each) of names with more than 3 tokens. This is due more to the fact that four forenames formed from these three stems occupy upper positions in the name rankings of newborns: *Bozhidar* and *Bozhidara* (in the top twenty), *Vladimir* (in the top twenty), and *Raya* (in the top ten), and, to a lesser degree, to the presence of a large variety of names containing these stems. If we compare

<sup>11</sup> These examples have been extracted from the corpora of newborn names for 2014, which also contain names with single and double tokens.

the data illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, showing the relative percentages of the various given names with the root *rad-*, it becomes clear that the variety of names today is quite small in comparison with the long lists contained in the different anthroponymic dictionaries. Barely 10 forenames (for MPNs and FPNs together) have more than three tokens and fall within the scope of the present research. This means that they are considered prestigious and have stable usage.

First and foremost, we must comment on the first name *Raya*. It has already been established that this is one of the most popular FPNs overall today. This is actually the only FPN formed on the stem *rad-*<sup>12</sup> that is found in all of the corpora studied. The rest of the female names included in Figures 1 and 2 are found only in the three largest cities: Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna.<sup>13</sup> The first name *Radka* also warrants special attention since, according to Kovachev (1995)'s data for the 20th century, it is the most popular of all female names of domestic origin, being the only one that ends up in the top ten in frequency (p. 596). Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the name is still found among the names of newborns, but in 2018, only in Plovdiv does it have more than two tokens. This means that it is not found in the remaining corpora, or if it is found, it appears only once or twice. We can assert that with this name, the same process of the replacement of the suffixed form *Radka* with the unsuffixed *Rada* has been taking place, which is also seen with other names – for example, *Ivanka* and *Petranka* being replaced today by *Ivana* and *Petra*.

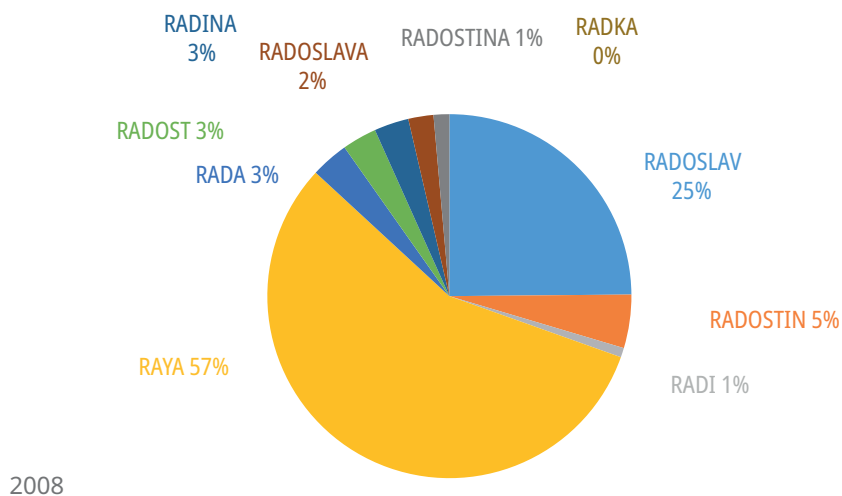
Regarding male names, the first name *Radi*, which is already forging its way among the names with more than two tokens, should be discussed. The data show that for now, this is a fact only in Sofia, but trends spread quickly from the capital to other populated places in the country. The name today can no longer be interpreted as “an eastern form of *Rade*” (Zaimov, 1988, p. 185), with the characteristic eastern dialect vowel reduction *e > i*, because the dialectal characteristics of personal names have long been left in the past. At the

<sup>12</sup> There are no doubts in our onomastic literature regarding the origins and meaning of the name *Raya*. The name is explained as female variant of *Rayo*, which is derived from *Rad(o)* and *-yo* (Vaygand, 1926; Ilchev, 1969; Zaimov, 1988; Kovachev, 1995). Today this connection has faded and is unintelligible for most speakers of the language, who connect the meaning of this name with the common noun *ray* ‘paradise’.

<sup>13</sup> The city of Rousse (2018), where the FPNs *Radina* and *Radost* are found with more than two tokens, presents an exception.

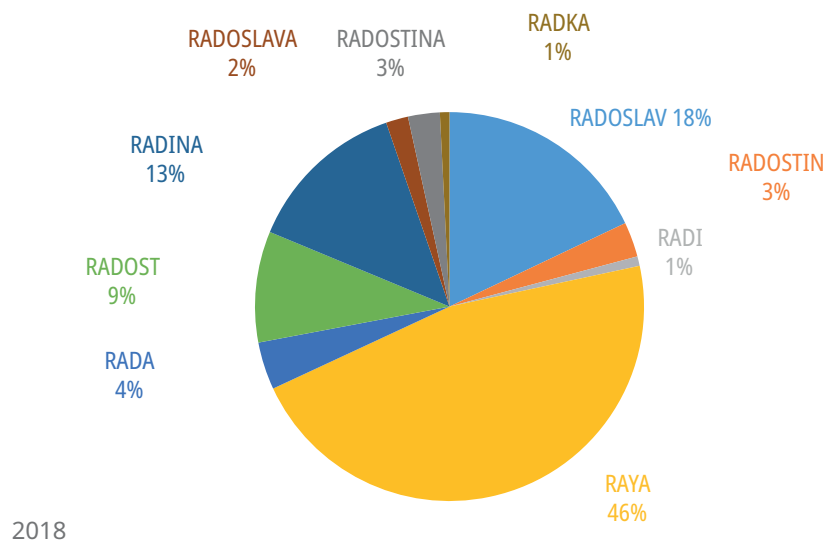
beginning of the 21st century, the name *Radi* is part of a clearly expressed trend of establishing a name that is diminutive in its origins, ending in *-i*, often gender-neutral, under the influence of an American pattern – for example, *Viki*, *Niki*, *Toni*. The name *Radi* is proof that this tendency is spreading onto domestic name bases as well, as some formations are already functioning as both male and female (*Tsveti*), while others are potentially this sort: *Vladi*, *Radi*, *Slavi* (see Vlahova-Angelova, 2020).

Unfortunately, we could not track the precise dynamics of domestic name stems over a historical period of longer than 10 years, because we do not have other statistical data at our disposal other than those presented by H. Gandev (1989) for the early Ottoman rule period (15th century). From this comparison, it is evident that only one of the most prevalent domestic names bases today corresponds with the domestic names bases most frequently encountered in the 15th century: *rad-* ‘joy’, *drag-* ‘dear’, *dobr-* ‘good’, and *brat-* ‘brother’ (Gandev, 1989). The stems *drag-*, *dobr-*, and *brat-* do not appear at all in the corpora we researched; that is, if found at all, the names formed from them have very rare, singular uses, and the base *stan-* ‘stand up’ is very poorly represented. Only two forenames with this base are encountered among the MPNs: *Stanislav* (better represented in most cities) and *Stanimir* (only in the three largest cities: Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna). Their female counterparts are registered among the FPNs: *Stanislava* and *Stanimira*, which are found only in Sofia in 2008 and 2018; and the name *Stanka*, registered only in Plovdiv, in 2008. Keeping in mind the indisputable differences in the value system, worldview, and motives for the choice of a name by medieval man, the absence of a complete overlap is an entirely expected fact, but the presence of the stem *rad-* among the most productive bases in both the 15th century and today is at once a testimony to the continuity and enduring tradition of the Bulgarian anthroponomasticon.



**Figure 1. The relative percentages of the given names with the root *rad-* in 2008**

Source: own work based on NSI data.



**Figure 2. The relative percentages of the various given names with the root *rad-* in 2018**

Source: own work based on NSI data.



## 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, we should summarize that the overall share of names formed from domestic stems is not alarmingly small and constitutes approximately 20% of all names analyzed among newborn children; moreover, no substantial change was observed between the two years studied. This demonstrates that interest in them by contemporary parents is stable, and they are accepted as prestigious names by a large part of Bulgarians even today, in our highly globalized society in which individuals increasingly declare themselves to be citizens of the world, professing supranational cultural values. The comparison of the data with those of the penultimate decade of the 20th century shows that their prestige has been maintained, unchanged, up to today. This is evident from the trend in the revival of ancient dithematic names, which began even then, and is still valid today, as well as from the presence of new, more modern variants of the names.

Regarding the most popular names with domestic origins, it is asserted that there has been a change in their composition compared to at the end of the 20th century, especially in FPNs. The current favorites, *Bozhidar* and *Raya*, dominate in the period studied, but it is very likely that in the future they will be replaced by other domestic names, which will gain prestige or regain their former prestige. It is evident that over a long period of time, different names formed from the same base consistently exchange their popularity; for example, *Tsvetana* and *Tsvetanka* were replaced at the end of the 20th century by *Tsvetelina*, and today, *Tsvetelina* is already competing with *Tsvetina*. This shows that suffixation continues to be a stable model for modernizing the anthroponomasticon, and it would not be surprising if the next favorite name is some new formation that exists in a still latent condition – on the periphery of the list of names, among the forenames with single tokens. Moreover, there are some new formations from domestic stems registered. At this stage, however, they have little popularity and are found mainly in Sofia, but they fit the notion of a prestigious name, since they are formed with specific suffixes that are “fashionable” at the moment, have both male and female variants, and are characterized as sounding international.

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### Abbreviations

FPN – female personal name

MPN – male personal name

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