DOI: 10.30816/ICONN4/2017/20

Reflecting moldavian girl-naming post-Communist trends through secular vs. Christian onomastic patterns

Nadia-Nicoleta Morăraşu
"Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, Romania

Abstract: The paper starts from the empirical observation that Moldavia is one of the Romanian regions resistant to change in onomastic patterns even after the fall of the Communist regime. The preference for Romanian Christian names, used as the only first names or in combination with secular ones, is a phenomenon that the study explores by investigating an inventory of about 2,300 names of female students enrolled in humanities (philology and social sciences) classes of 6 high schools from the town of Bacău.
The findings confirm that the tendency towards following onomastic traditions is still predominant in both urban and rural areas, whereas the intrusion of foreign onomastic elements did not manifest so strongly over the period under investigation (1991–2003), compared with the recent proliferation of Westernized given names, accelerated by the exposure to the mass media and new technologies, as well as by the migration of many young parents to European countries.
Keywords: girl-naming patterns, secular names, saint names, onomastic trend, Moldavian region.

I. Theoretical background

I.1. Romanian female first-name patterns

The interest in studying the Romanian personal naming system has long been manifested by linguists (Iulian Zanne, Ştefan Paşca, N.A. Constantinescu, Alexandru Graur, to name but a few) and has intensified in the past decades, due to the contributions of reputed specialists in onomastic studies, such as Gheorghe Bolocan, Domnița Tomescu, Cristian Ionescu, Mile Tomici, Ion Toma, Vasile Frățilă, Daiana and Oliviu Felecan, etc., as well as by their doctoral students who focused on classes and subclasses of names. Regionally and nationally used onomastic patterns have benefited from special attention in articles from two journals published by the University of Craiova: Studii şi cercetări de onomastică (Studies and Research in Onomastics, issued yearly from 1995 to 2003) and Studies and Research in Onomastics and Lexicology (SCOL, published since 2008).

Of the typical classes and subclasses of personal names recorded and analysed by onomasticians (given names, family names, bynames and nicknames), feminine

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

anthroponyms were approached by Aspazia Reguş and Corneliu Reguş in *Nume de femei în vechi acte istorice (sec. XIV-XVI)* [Female names in old historical documents – 14th–16th centuries] and Anca-Maria Bercaru in the recently published study *Antroponimele feminine la sârbi şi români* [Feminine anthroponyms for Serbians and Romanians].

The Romanian formal anthroponymic system is currently based on a two-class pattern for girl names, which consist of family name and first name. As the names are bestowed upon birth, the bearers are obviously not involved in their choice, yet they are expected to bear the names chosen by their genitors throughout life. There are few variations in the names from the time of recording in the Civil Registry. The most frequent one is the change of surname in the case of married women who traditionally take their husbands' surname. However, they have the onomastic freedom to keep their maiden name upon marriage or adopt the married name instead or in addition to the one of their father. Upon divorce, the reverse case occurs: they either keep their married name or recover the maiden one. Otherwise, it is only in legally motivated cases that they may apply for an administrative or judicial procedure of official name change. As far as female given/first names are concerned, they conventionally consist of one to two names (or multiple names in rare cases) combined.

Considering that the semantic load of personal names was gradually lost, one can claim that they currently fulfil the function of identification as overt identity markers for their bearers. They encapsulate information about gender, religion, origin, lineage, etc. As these names are bestowed upon birth, the bearer is not involved in their choice; nevertheless, the bearer is expected to keep the given name chosen by his/her parents throughout life.

I.2. Factors influencing post-Communist Romanian naming patterns

The social and political evolution of Romania after the fall of the Communist regime led to the manifestation of some less predictable onomastic trends towards the proliferation of modern names in parallel with the preservation of more traditional ones. The main factors that affect the choice of given names are religious, social and economic, cultural and aesthetic, to which one may add family and local tradition, desire of uniqueness and onomastic fashion.

I.3. Female names and their origin: lay/secular names vs. saint names

The initial significance conferred to personal names led to their classification (Topor-Marin 2003) into names for designation (of secular inspiration) and names for invocation (of religious inspiration). The former originate in appellatives meant to describe the bearer or some circumstance related to his/her birth. The latter have the role of placing the named individual under the protection of a patron saint, evoking religious holidays and qualities worthy of a good Christian.

One of the criteria which is relevant for the inclusion of Christian names in the

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

classification of onomastic patterns involves the namer (the person who performs the naming act). In this respect, we may speak of:

a. Christian names as the given names chosen by parents/family and bestowed on girls upon birth;

b. nicknames as individual substitute names received from others throughout life;

c. pseudonyms and other self-given and assumed names.

Anca Bercaru (2014) proposes a typology of first names in terms of their origin into a) traditional secular names; b) names of Slavic origin; c) biblical and calendar names; d) modern names. Traditional secular names and names of Slavic origin are represented by a few female names that are still used (Bercaru 2007: 171). Traditional names often bear a cultural imprint of the region and time in which the bearer is born:

a) names indicating the origin of the bearer: *Armeanca*, *Greaca*, *Românca*, *Ungura*[1];

b) names derived from plant names and tree-related terms: *Brânduşa*, *Cetina*, *Frăguța*, *Violeta*;

c) names derived from animal names: *Furnica*, *Lupa*, *Păuna*;

d) names indicating family relations: *Fetița*, *Sora*;

e) names referring to physical and character features: *Alba*, *Buna*;

f) names indicating popular beliefs: *Bucura*;

g) names derived from appellatives: *Doina*, *Sînziana*.

By comparison, biblical and calendar names are very well represented in the Romanian anthroponymic system. Most of them entered our language under Slavic, Greek and Catholic Church influence. There are also many variants of calendar names, hypocoristics or derivative forms that are borrowed from Western sources or formed by means of imitating such models.

Apart from family and local tradition, the religious influence is extremely strongly felt all across the country. Saint names are considered the most suitable for religious people who choose names for their children. Many times, the same Christian name is passed down across generations and this enhances the feeling of kinship. The choice of a Christian name is influenced by the religious holidays celebrated at about the time of birth, by the names of family members and even of godparents. Most often, the common belief is that the patron saint will offer protection to the name bearer and parents willingly make such a nominal choice. There are also reported situations when priests who notice that there is a higher incidence of too modern names threaten congregation members that they will not record those children's names in church registries or baptise the children if they do not bear Christian names. Therefore, despite the political

[1] The English appellatives corresponding to these names are as follows: a) The Armenian (girl/woman), The Greek, The Romanian, The Hungarian; b) crocus, savin, wild strawberry, violet; c) ant, she-wolf, peahen; d) little girl, sister; e) the white, the good; f) joy; g) goldenrod. The only appellative without any English equivalent is *doina*, which is culturally embedded as it refers to a Romanian traditional musical tune style.

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

changes that affected the social life of the Romanians, biblical and calendar names continue to be at the top of the most frequently used baby names in Romania. The most recent statistics from the People Registry indicate that *Maria* is by far the most common girl name in all regions[2].

At the same time, modern names used in combination with or instead of traditional ones are on the increase in all regions. Their origins and forms are extremely diverse. Until 2009 when the Civil Code specifically stipulated the interdiction to give Romanian newborn children ridiculous or defamatory names, as well as names derived from objects or places, "there were cases in Romania in which the parents named their children after their favorite car brand, film heroes such as Superman, or even objects."[3] The study conducted by Morăraşu and Drugă in 2011 on first-name giving patterns of Gypsy co-nationals proves that such names really exist and they may have a negative impact on the bearers.

In addition to these typologies, it is worth considering the etymological classification advanced by la Stella (1993) and adopted by Petrache in *Dicţionar enciclopedic al numelor de botez: cu un tabel alfabetic al sfintilor ortodocşi* [Encyclopaedic dictionary of baptismal names: with an alphabetic table of Orthodox saints) (2000: 9–10):

1. devotional names – mystic denominations, ancient names which preserve their sacred character:

a. theoforic names: *Daniela, Eleonora, Elisabeta, Gabriela, Isabela, Teofana*;

b. names of religious holidays: *Rozalia*;

c. saint and calendar names: *Alexandra, Ana, Anastasia, Anisia, Cecilia, Claudia, Cristina, Elena, Elisabeta, Emilia, Eufrosina, Irina, Lidia, Maria* etc.;

d. biblical names: *Emanuela, Eva, Marta, Sara, Rebeca* etc.;

2. affective names which reflect the daily contact with the family and the feelings towards one's habitat by designating:

a. birth order;

b. birth signs (augural names: *Aurora, Irina, Laura, Mirela, Iustina, Letitia, Malvina*);

c. physical or moral characteristics (descriptive names: *Melania, Flavia, Ramona, Sofia, Valeria*);

d. relation with the natural world (plants, animals, gems, stars and natural phenomena, occupations etc.: *Dafina, Esmeralda, Gentiana, Smaranda, Violeta, Margareta, Narcisa, Roza*);

3. names expressing admiration and given in honour of:

a. a famous person (prophet, literary character, legendary hero etc.): *Penelopa, Otilia, Venera*;

b. a people, a culture – ideological names and celebrity names: *Nadia, Riana*.

---

[2] http://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/social/numele-preferate-de-romani–656050

[3] https://www.romania-insider.com/popular-baby-names-romania/

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

II. Research methodology

II.1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is twofold:

1. to offer an insight into the feminine naming patterns used over more than a decade after the fall of the Communist regime, using both quantitative (statistical) methods and qualitative research tools;

2. to test a method of selecting research material that can be used for conducting research on other types of names.

II.2. Sampling methodology

Assumptions

Based on several years' experience with studying naming systems from different perspectives, our assumptions regarding the sampling population could be summed up in terms of

• Representativeness (the population is representative of the female population of the region of Moldova);

• Homogeneity (the subjects have similar ages, ethnic backgrounds and educational interests);

• Data validity (provided by the official character of the data collected: the names are included in a database that is publicly available to any user with an Internet connection; there is no restriction imposed on the usage of such data);

• Generalisability (a fact or phenomenon encountered in our sample is applicable to all the people of the target population).

To fulfil the purposes set for our study, we used purposive sampling which involves the following steps:

1. Deciding on the research problem: Romanian girl-naming trends in the post-Communist period;

2. Determining the type of information needed. As long as information needed involves secular *vs.* Christian onomastic patterns, it requires a high degree of interpretation regarding cultural significance; therefore, the subjects should have some specifically defined qualities.

3. Establishing data collection sources. The present study focuses on the data collection of female first names from Bacău area from an official source provided by the Romanian Ministry of National Education for high school admission (http://admitere.edu.ro/). Each admission from 2005 to 2016 has its own webpage (which can be accessed from the main page) and provides the assignment of students enlisted as a result of a computer-based distribution to the classes for which they have opted. The nationwide distribution takes into consideration their options, expressed in the order of preferences, and their national evaluation results. The data collection took place from January to March 2017; it was entirely dependent on the online sources at the time of retrieval, but once the names were collected for each year from 2005 to 2016, there were no new entries.

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

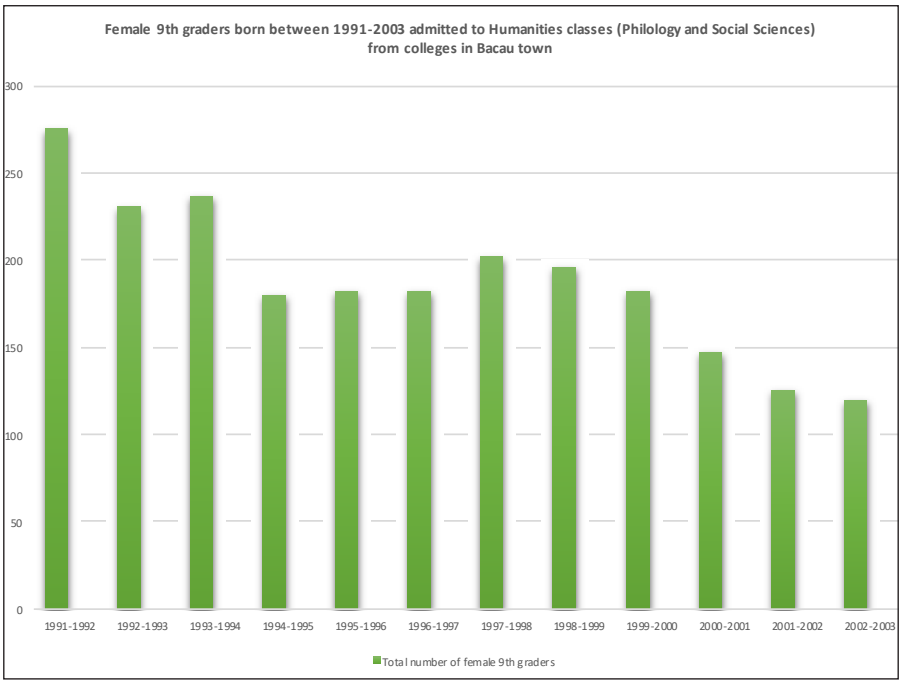


Figure 1

The number of subjects is influenced by the number of places available for admission every year, but Humanities classes predominantly attract girls as compared with vocational classes, in which boys are often the majority. What is obvious from this table is that the population of female 9th graders in Humanities classes from the six colleges in Bacău ("Gheorghe Vrănceanu" College, "Vasile Alecsandri" College, "Stefan cel Mare" National Pedagogical College, "Ferdinand I" College, "Henri Coandă" College, "Mihai Eminescu" College) decreased by more than half between the 2005 admission (corresponding to the subjects born in 1991–1992) and the 2016 admission. This explains why the number of names collected for the years 2000–2003 is much lower.

4. Using appropriate data gathering techniques: quantitative and qualitative tools for collecting and analysing onomastic patterns were used.

5. Selecting the population sampled: 2281 subjects were chosen, based on gender, age, residency, high-school class profile. Our sampling groups were homogeneous in terms of age (subjects were aged 14 to 15 at the time their names were recorded into the database) and the gender-based selection was facilitated by the electronic listing. One essential step before processing the onomastic material was to exclude the male students from the lists. Their number was negligible compared to the number of their female fellows. We also have additional information such as the geographical

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

or ethnic origin, which may be relevant to the qualitative analysis. The subjects' rural or urban appurtenance can be identified by the names of the institutions where they attended secondary school. However, this is not always a clear indicator that they come from an urban area, because some village residents may have commuted or may have been brought by their parents to a town school on a daily basis. There are less chances of having a town resident studying in a village-located school. The full names indicate that most subjects belong to families that are Romanian, but some names display a transparent foreign origin: e.g., Arab (*Saada Roz, Muzieni Amirah, Nawar Maha, Abdullah Clara*) or Italian (*Belli Cristina, Pasco Emma, Ario Stefanie Theodora*).

6. In *analyzing data and interpreting results*, we took into consideration that purposive sampling is an inherently biased method, which means that interpretations should not be applied beyond the sampled population.

III.1. Outcome and discussion

III.1.1. Statistical reports

The naming patterns that are prevalent across the population sampled are represented in the table below, which indicates that there a descending trend was registered in one-name patterns, from 60% in 1991–1992 to less than 10% in 2002–2003.

Table 1. Trends in naming patterns between 1991 and 2003

Year of birth	Distribution of total number of subjects	Research subjects with one given name	Research subjects with two-name combinations	Research subjects with three-name patterns
1991–1992	275	83	192	
1992–1993	231	66	156	
1993–1994	237	57	179	1
1994–1995	180	76	104	
1995–1996	182	97	85	
1996–1997	182	83	99	
1997–1998	202	75	127	
1998–1999	196	46	146	4
1999–2000	182	45	137	
2000–2001	147	33	114	
2001–2002	125	30	93	2
2002–2003	119	17	100	2

The three-name combinations include at least a saint name or a calendar name – *Ana-Maria-Mădălina, Ana-Alexandra-Monica, Maria-Elisa-Mădălina, Diana Bianca Petrina, Mihaela Adriana Domnița, Andreea Iuliana Maria, Mari Sanda Violeta and*

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

Bianca Maria Mădălina. The only exception with exclusively secular names is *Daiana Iasmina Naomi*.

Nationwide statistics for the most common secular and saint names for girls largely include the same ranking of names as the one we have drawn for female 9th graders from Bacău colleges born between 1991 and 2003 (Figure 2): the top three saint names are *Elena, Maria* and *Alexandra*, while the top three secular names are *Andreea, Alina* and *Mădălina*.

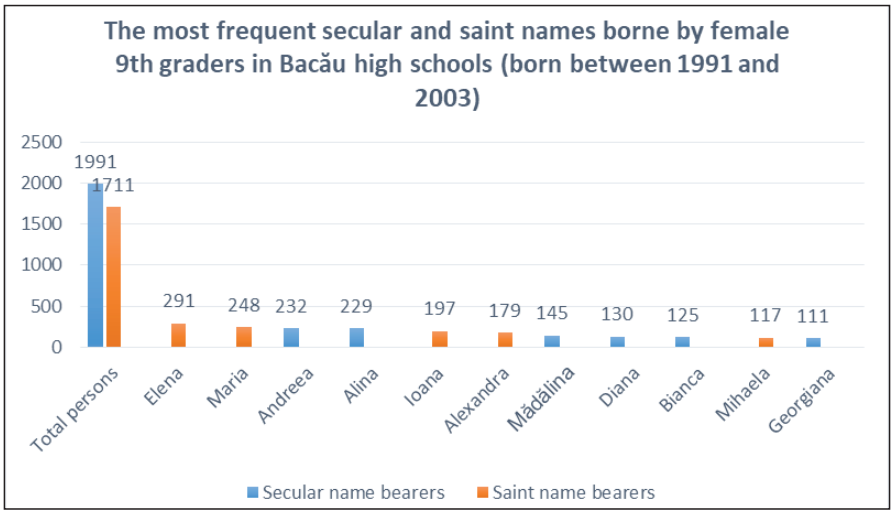


Figure 2

The two figures below reflect the percentage of the most popular secular (Figure 3) and saint names (Figure 4) in the sample population of our study. We chose sets of 20 names for each class on account of their rate of occurrence (from about 300 girls bearing the name to 15).

One of the most reliable statistics for first names in Romania recorded in 1999 is due to Gheorghe Bolocan. To observe the correlation between the total number of female bearers of specific names on country level and in the sample population, we have drawn a table with information referring to the numerical distribution of female names, their position in the name combinations identified with the sample population and the type of names according to their origin.

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

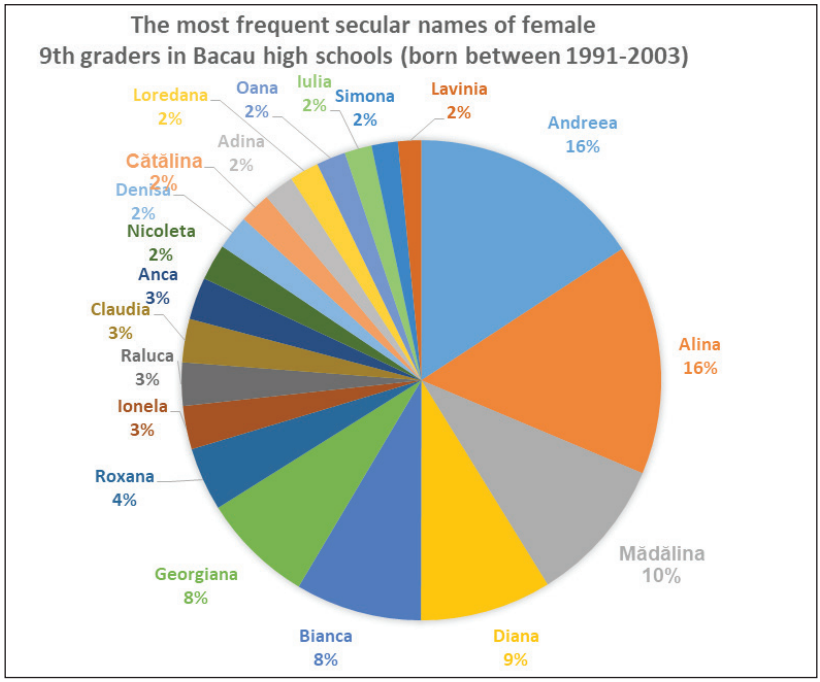


Figure 3

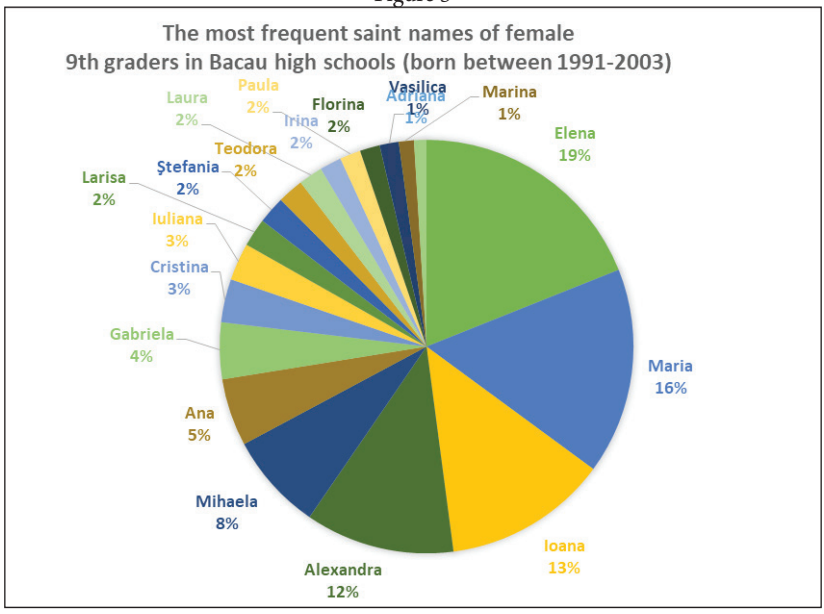


Figure 4

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

Table 2. Distribution of female names in the sampled population vs. country level

No.	Female given names	Frequency on country level (Bolocan 1999)	Frequency in Bacău sample population (1991–2003)	First name in Bacău sample population	Middle name in Bacău sample population	Type of name and reference source
1.	*Elena*	690603	291	184	107	saint name (Ionescu 148–149)
2.	*Maria*	1143282	248	86	162	saint name (Ionescu 265–268)
3.	*Andreea*	74980	232	214	18	secular name (Petrache 21)
4.	*Alina*	86718	229	208	21	secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 27)
5.	*Ioana*	271278	197	103	94	saint name (Ionescu 229)
6.	*Alexandra*	67219	179	134	45	saint name (Ionescu 25)
7.	*Mădălina*	25717	145	116	29	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 258)
8.	*Diana*	35332	130	84	46	secular name (Ionescu 129)
9.	*Bianca*	16956	125	89	36	secular name (Ionescu 74)
10.	*Mihaela*	174167	117	84	33	saint name (Ionescu 280)
11.	*Georgiana*	35874	111	40	71	secular name; derivative (Petrache 53)
12.	*Ana*	363225	81	47	34	saint name (Ionescu 30–32)
13.	*Gabriela*	89756	68	12	54	derived saint name (Ionescu 183)
14.	*Roxana*	36325	63	42	21	secular name (Ionescu 336)
15.	*Cristina*	119508	52	30	22	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 117)
16.	*Iuliana*	78240	45	21	24	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 239)
17.	Ionela	61936	43	19	24	secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 228)
18.	*Claudia*	47754	43	25	18	secular name; Catholic calendar (Ionescu 101)
19.	*Raluca*	26899	43	26	17	secular name (Ionescu 325)
20.	*Anca*	44145	42	41	1	secular name; derivative (Ionescu 30)
21.	*Nicoleta*	92102	36	16	20	secular name (Ionescu 294)
22.	Denisa		34	29	5	secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 132)
23.	Larisa		34	18	16	saint name (Ionescu 242)
24.	*Daniela*	126274	33	18	15	secular name (Ionescu 122)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Female given names	Frequency on country level (Bolocan 1999)	Frequency in Bacău sample population (1991–2003)	First name in Bacău sample population	Middle name in Bacău sample population	Type of name and reference source
25.	*Ștefania*	18765	33	19	14	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 361)
26.	*Cătălina*	26316	31	16	15	secular name (Ionescu 143)
27.	*Teodora*	25386	31	19	12	saint name (Ionescu 379)
28.	*Adina*	21838	30	22	8	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 10)
29.	*Oana*	39233	29	21	8	secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 227–228)
30.	*Laura*	36414	29	24	5	Catholic saint name (Ionescu 242–243)
31.	*Loredana*	27324	29	16	13	secular name (Ionescu 244)
32.	*Iulia*	26514	27	22	5	secular name (Ionescu 239)
33.	*Irina*	71932	26	18	8	saint name (Ionescu 234)
34.	*Simona*	58544	26	21	5	secular name (Ionescu 348)
35.	*Paula*	21202	25	20	5	saint name (Ionescu 311)
36.	*Florina*	33720	24	14	10	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 176)
37.	Petronela	16173	24	10	14	Catholic saint name (Ionescu 315)
38.	*Vasilica*	70245	23	9	14	saint name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 386)
39.	*Lavinia*	15282	23	20	3	secular name (Ionescu 244)
40.	Adelina		21	18	3	secular name (Ionescu 27)
41.	*Ramona*	39979	19	16	3	secular name (Ionescu 325–326)
42.	*Marina*	12759	18	9	7	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 268–269)
43.	*Monica*	47492	17	8	9	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 286)
44.	Miruna		16	11	5	secular name
45.	Beatrice		16	10	5	secular name/Catholic saint name
46.	*Adriana*	71251	15	9	6	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 13–14)
47.	*Silvia*	58961	15	12	3	secular name (Ionescu 154)
48.	*Ancuța*	16384	15	10	5	secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 30)
49.	*Mariana*	185610	14	8	6	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 266)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Female given names	Frequency on country level (Bolocan 1999)	Frequency in Bacău sample population (1991–2003)	First name in Bacău sample population	Middle name in Bacău sample population	Type of name and reference source
50.	*Camelia*	40782	14	9	5	secular name (Ionescu 84)
51.	*Delia*	11874	14	13	1	secular name (Ionescu 127)
52.	*Sabina*	11840	14	10	4	Catholic saint name (Ionescu 338)
53.	*Elisabeta*	138575	12	6	6	saint name (Ionescu 151–153)
54.	*Corina*	31993	12	9	3	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 108–109)
55.	*Emilia*	56437	11	6	5	secular name (Ionescu 157)
56.	*Florentina*	52251	11	3	8	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 176)
57.	Emanuela		10	8	2	secular name (Ionescu 154)
58.	Andrada		9	6	3	secular name
59.	*Valentina*	35044	8	3	5	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 382–383)
60.	*Lidia*	22926	8	4	4	saint name (Ionescu 249)
61.	Carmen		8	6	2	secular name (Ionescu 87)
62.	Francisca		8	2	6	saint name (Ionescu 181)
63.	Iustina		8	3	5	saint name (Ionescu 238)
64.	Mara		8	7	1	variant of *Maria* (Ionescu 261)
65.	*Liliana*	65556	7	4	3	secular name (Ionescu 251)
66.	*Magdalena*	29541	7	1	6	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 258–259)
67.	*Sorina*	11631	7	3	4	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 353)
68.	Amalia		6	6		secular name/Catholic saint name (Ionescu 27–28)
69.	*Ecaterina*	81290	6	2	4	saint name (Ionescu 143–144)
70.	Eliza		6	5	1	secular name (Ionescu 152)
71.	Geanina		6	3	3	secular name
72.	*Cornelia*	59658	5	2	3	saint name (Ionescu 110)
73.	*Veronica*	59204	5	3	2	saint name (Ionescu 402, Bercaru 107)
74.	*Marinela*	30160	5	2	3	secular name (Ionescu 269)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Female given names	Frequency on country level (Bolocan 1999)	Frequency in Bacău sample population (1991–2003)	First name in Bacău sample population	Middle name in Bacău sample population	Type of name and reference source
75.	*Livia*	28100	5	3	2	saint name (Ionescu 252)
76.	*Anamaria*	21294	5	3	2	secular name
77.	Aurora	17693	5	3	2	secular name (Ionescu 57)
78.	*Ilinca*	14538	5	4	1	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 149)
79.	*Otilia*	11657	5	2	3	secular name (Ionescu 302)
80.	Alice		5	3	2	secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 26–27)
81.	Cezara		5	5	4	Catholic saint name (Ionescu 95)
82.	Flavia		5	4	1	secular name (Ionescu 175)
83.	Francesca		5	1	4	secular name
84.	Mălina		5	4	1	secular name (Ionescu 155)
85.	Roberta		5	4	1	secular name (Ionescu 329)
86.	*Luminița*	37653	4	2	2	secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 257)
87.	*Violeta*	33728	4	2	2	secular name (Ionescu 393)
88.	*Felicia*	24018	4		4	saint name (Ionescu 168–169)
89.	*Mioara*	21950	4	3	1	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 268)
90.	*Dana*	15727	4	3	1	secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 121)
91.	Carla		4	2	2	secular name
92.	Codrina		4	2	2	secular name
93.	Daria		4	4		secular name (Ionescu 124–125)
94.	Elisa		4	3	1	secular name – hypocoristic
95.	Evelina		4	4		secular name
96.	Patricia		4	3	2	secular name (Ionescu 309)
97.	Simina		4	3	1	secular name (Ionescu 348)
98.	*Violeta*	33728	4	2	2	secular name (Ionescu 393)
99.	*Angela*	46852	3	2	1	Catholic saint name (Ionescu 36)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Female given names	Frequency on country level (Bolocan 1999)	Frequency in Bacău sample population (1991–2003)	First name in Bacău sample population	Middle name in Bacău sample population	Type of name and reference source
100.	*Lucia*	37277	3	2	1	secular name (Ionescu 253–255)
101.	*Constantina*	29870	3	2	1	saint name
102.	*Marcela*	22398	3		3	secular name (Ionescu 262)
103.	*Lăcrămioara*	18583	3	1	2	secular name – derivative (Ionescu 246)
104.	*Marta*	11134	3	1	2	saint name (Ionescu 271)
105.	*Rodica*	94639	2	2		secular name (Ionescu 329)
106.	Antonia		3	1	2	Catholic saint name (Ionescu 30)
107.	Bogdana		3	1	2	secular name (Ionescu 74)
108.	Ema		3	3		secular name, cognate of Emma (Ionescu 153)
109.	Genoveva		3	1	2	saint name (Ionescu 186–187)
110.	Ingrid		3	2	1	Catholic saint name
111.	Medeea		3	2	1	secular name (Ionescu 131)
112.	Rebeca		3	1	2	secular name
113.	Sorana		3	2	1	secular name (Ionescu 353)
114.	Suzana		3	2	1	secular name (Ionescu 356–357)
115.	Teofana		3	2	1	saint name (Ionescu 366–367)
116.	Tereza		3	2	1	saint name (Ionescu 368–370)
117.	Theodora		3	1	2	secular name (Ionescu 379)
118.	*Adela*	21160	2	2		secular name (Ionescu 11–12)
119.	*Ștefana*	17921	2	1	1	saint name – derivative (Ionescu 361)
120.	Alisa		2	1		secular name (Ionescu 26–27)
121.	Angelica		2	2		secular name – hypocoristic
122.	Antonela		2	1	1	secular name (Ionescu 40)
123.	Antoneta		2	1	1	secular name (Ionescu 40)
124.	Aura		2	1		secular name (Ionescu 57)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Female given names	Frequency on country level (Bolocan 1999)	Frequency in Bacău sample population (1991–2003)	First name in Bacău sample population	Middle name in Bacău sample population	Type of name and reference source
125.	Călina		2	1	1	secular name (Ionescu 91)
126.	Celina		2	2		saint name (Ionescu 95)
127.	Cerasela		2	2		secular name
128.	Daiana		2	1	1	secular name
129.	Denisia		2	1	1	secular name
130.	Fabiana		2	2		secular name (Ionescu 166)
131.	Georgeta		2		2	secular name (Ionescu 192)
132.	Iasmina		2	1	1	secular name
133.	Iris		2	2		secular name
134.	Luana		2	1	1	secular name
135.	Nadia		2	1	1	secular name
136.	Rebecca		2	2		secular name
137.	Rodica	94639	2	2		secular name (Ionescu 329–330)
138.	Sandra		2	2		secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 24)
139.	Tania		2	2		secular name (Ionescu 365)
140.	Valeria		2	1	1	saint name (Ionescu 383)
141.	Vanessa		2	2		secular name
142.	Virginia		2	2		saint name (Ionescu 394)
143.	Viviana		2	1	1	secular name (Ionescu 397)
144.	Zamfira		2	1	1	secular name (Ionescu 402)
145.	Xenia		2	2		secular name (Ionescu 400)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

As illustrated by Bercaru (2014: 31), the Romanian language has the following structural classes of feminine names:

• Primary names (*Ana, Carmen, Diana, Ecaterina, Maria*) or appellatives (*Brânduşa, Lăcrămioara*);

• Simple hypocoristics (*Flori* < *Florica*; *Vali* < *Valentina, Lena* < *Elena*; *Mia* < *Maria*);

• Derivative hypocoristics: *Lenuța* < *Leana* < *Elena, Ileana*;

• Derivatives with simple and compound suffixes: *Ancuța* < *Anca* < *Ana, Măriuca* < *Maria*.

Most female names in our corpus are primary names from different sources: Christian calendars, erudite/scholarly sources and popular culture. However, we have also found many hypocoristics and derivatives such as *Ada, Anda, Anica, Ancuța, Angelica, Antonela, Catrinel, Dumitrela, Fănuța, Ionela, Lenuța, Maricica, Marinela, Marineta, Măriuța, Mihăița, Silvica, Valerica* and *Vasilica*.

III.1.2. Traditional vs. modern names of unique bearers

Almost half of the names collected (133 of 278) are used as unique identifiers, because there is a single bearer for each of these names. Most of them appear in combination with fashionable names, especially saints' names, which are intended to offer protection to the persons on whom they are bestowed. About half of the names listed below (69 of 133) can be found in Romanian onomastic dictionaries of names and in onomastic reference materials. Most of the others are mentioned and explained in online sources, but these are less reliable than the printed ones.

On the one hand, there are traditionally Romanian girl names (primary, hypocoristic or derivative forms) which have often fallen out of use (*Anica, Fănuța, Dumitra, Lenuța, Margareta, Maricica, Măriuța, Minodora, Rozina, Rucsanda, Silvica, Sînziana, Tincuța, Valerica, Vasilca, Varvara, Victoria* etc.). They reflect the tendency towards following onomastic patterns which pertain to old family traditions or of reviving such forms when they are considered fashionable again (*Ilinca, Catinca, Rucsandra, Smaranda*).

While some names are the conventional feminine form of male names (*Codrina* < *Codrin*; *Cosmina* < *Cosmin*; *Valentina* < *Valentin*; *Emanuela* < *Emanuel*; *Mariana* < *Marian, Florina* < *Florin*; *Paula* < *Paul*; *Daniela* < *Daniel*; *Claudia* < *Claudiu*; *Gabriela* < *Gabriel*; *Iuliana* < *Iulian*; *Ionela* < *Ionel*; *Alexandra* < *Alexandru*; *Andreea* < *Andrei*), others are oddly derived from male names such as *Traian* (*Traiana*), *Ovidiu* (*Ovidia*), *Emilian* (*Emiliana*), *Constantin* (*Constantina*) and *Fabian* (*Fabiana*).

On the other hand, the desire to confer uniqueness and strongly individualise one's offspring explains the impressive number of foreign names, most of them used exactly in their original form. Some of them are just Western variants of calendar names (*Angela, Patricia*). They also reflect the onomastic fashion of Westernisation under the influence of the mass media and social migration (*Ambra, Ania, Anisia, Anastasia, Christine, Edith, Evelinne, Estera, Elyda, Emma, Ella, Lenya, Karina, Michelle, Nora, Nicole, Paola, Roz, Ruth, Naomi, Smara, Sigrid, Teresita, Thalida, Theona, Thea, Timeea* etc.). Some of the Italian and English names are graphically adapted: *Alis, Biatris, Brigita, Denis*.

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

Table 3. Names of unique bearers in the sampled population

No.	Girl names	First name	Middle name	Type of name
1.	*Ada*	1		calendar name (Ionescu 10, Bercaru 87)
2.	*Agnesa*	1		secular name, affective name (Ionescu 19, Bercaru 88)
3.	*Aida*	1		secular name
4.	*Alisia*	1		secular name
5.	*Ambra*	1		secular name
6.	*Amirah*	1		secular name
7.	*Anais*	1		secular name
8.	*Analisa*	1		secular name
9.	*Anastasia*	1		secular name (Bercaru 89)
10.	*Anda*	1		secular name
11.	*Ania*	1		secular name
12.	*Anica*	1		secular name, derivative (Paşca 160, Bercaru 89)
13.	*Anisia*	1		saint name (Bercaru 89)
14.	*Anita*	1		secular name, Western form of *Ana* (Ionescu 30, Bercaru 89)
15.	*Antoneta*	1		secular name, Western form of *Antonia* (Ionescu 40, Bercaru 89)
16.	*Ariadna*	1		saint name (Paşca 163, Bercaru 89)
17.	*Ariana*	1		secular name
18.	Avril		1	secular name
19.	*Benedetta*	1		secular name
20.	*Biatris*	1		secular name, variant of *Beatrice* or *Biatriz*
21.	*Bibiana*	1		Catholic saint name
22.	Brânduşa		1	secular name (Ionescu 77–79)
23.	*Brenda*	1		English secular name
24.	*Brigita*	1		secular name; Roman-Catholic saint name (Petrache 30)
25.	Carina		1	secular name (Petrache 31)
26.	*Casandra*	1		Spanish and Romanian secular name (Petrache 32)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Girl names	First name	Middle name	Type of name
27.	Catrinel		1	secular form, diminutive of *Ecaterina*
28.	*Cecilia*	1		Orthodox saint name (Ionescu 92, Bercaru 91)
29.	*Celestina*	1		Catholic saint name; Spanish and Italian secular name, Latinate form of *Caelestinus*
30.	Christiana		1	secular name
31.	Christine		1	secular name
32.	Cintia		1	secular name
33.	*Clara*	1		Catholic saint name (Ionescu 99, Petrache 31)
34.	*Clarissa*	1		secular name (Ionescu 99)
35.	*Consuela*	1		secular name (Ionescu 107)
36.	*Constandina*	1		secular name (Bercaru 91, Petrache 35)
37.	*Denis*	1		Christian calendar name, normally masculine form (Petrache 38)
38.	*Domnița*	1		secular name, hypocoristic (Bercaru 93)
39.	*Dora*	1		secular name, diminutive of Teodora, augural name (Petrache 40)
40.	*Dorina*	1		secular name, derivative (Petrache 40)
41.	*Dumitra*	1		secular name; saint name (Petrache 42)
42.	*Dumitrela*	1		secular name, derivative (Petrache 42)
43.	Ebru		1	secular name
44.	Edit		1	secular name (Petrache 42)
45.	Edith		1	secular name
46.	Elia		1	secular name
47.	Elida		1	secular name
48.	Ella		1	secular name, hypocoristic, Western form
49.	Else		1	secular name
50.	*Elyda*	1		secular name
51.	*Emiliana*	1		secular name (Petrache 45)
52.	*Emima*	1		secular name
53.	*Estera*	1		secular name, from the Biblical name *Ester* (Petrache 46)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Girl names	First name	Middle name	Type of name
54.	*Eva*	1		Bibical name (Pașca 232, Bercaru 95)
55.	Evelinne		1	secular name, French form of *Eva* (Bercaru 95)
56.	Evelyn		1	secular name, English form of *Eva* (Petrache 48)
57.	*Fănuța*	1		secular name, diminutive form of *Ștefana*
58.	*Grațiela*	1		secular augural name (Petrache 54)
59.	*Iana*	1		secular name, variant of *Elena* (Bercaru 97)
60.	*Irena*	1		secular name, variant of *Irina*, augural and devotional name (Petrache 61)
61.	*Iudita*	1		Catholic saint name (Pașca 264, Petrache 62)
62.	*Johanna*	1		secular name, English and German form of Ioana
63.	*Karina*	1		secular name
64.	*Lenuța*	1		secular name – hypocoristic (Pașca 230, Bercaru 98)
65.	Lenya		1	secular name
66.	Letisia		1	secular name
67.	*Letiția*	1		secular augural name (Petrache 62)
68.	*Liza*	1		secular name, hypocoristic (Pașca 230, Bercaru 94)
69.	Luciana		1	secular name, derivative (Ionescu 254, Petrache 66)
70.	*Lugiana*	1		secular name
71.	Luisa		1	secular name
72.	*Margareta*	1		secular name (Ionescu 263–264)
73.	Maricica		1	secular name – hypocoristic (Bercaru 100)
74.	*Marineta*	1		secular name – hypocoristic (Bercaru 100)
75.	Măriuța		1	secular name – hypocoristic (Bercaru 100)
76.	*Martina*	1		Catholic saint name (Bercaru 100)
77.	*Medeea*	1		secular name (Ionescu 131)
78.	*Melania*	1		Catholic saint name (Pașca 178, Bercaru 100)
79.	Michelle		1	secular name
80.	Mihăița		1	secular name, hypocoristic

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Girl names	First name	Middle name	Type of name
81.	Milena		1	secular name
82.	Minodora		1	saint name (Pașca 281, Bercaru 101)
83.	*Mirela*	1		secular name (Ionescu 283–284)
84.	*Miriam*	1	1	secular name (Ionescu 283)
85.	Naomi		1	secular name
86.	Natalia		1	calendar name (Bercaru 101)
87.	Nefertiti		1	secular name
88.	Neili		1	secular name
89.	Nicole		1	secular name
90.	Nina		1	secular name
91.	*Noemi*	1		secular name
92.	*Nona*	1		secular name
93.	Nora		1	secular name (Ionescu 150)
94.	Norina		1	secular name (Ionescu 150)
95.	*Ovidia*	1		secular name
96.	*Paola*	1		secular name, Western form of *Paula*
97.	*Patritia*	1		secular name
98.	*Persida*	1		secular name
99.	*Rabiha*	1		secular name
100.	*Rahela*	1		biblical name (Ionescu 232)
101.	*Regina*	1		secular name (Ionescu 327)
102.	Renata		1	secular name (Ionescu 328–329)
103.	*Roz*	1		secular name, short form of *Rosalind(a)*
104.	Rozina		1	secular name (Ionescu 335)
105.	Rucsanda		1	secular name, variant of Roxana
106.	*Ruth*	1		secular name of English, German or Dutch origin
107.	Sabrina		1	secular name of English, Italian or German origin

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

No.	Girl names	First name	Middle name	Type of name
108.	*Sanda*	1		secular name – hypocoristic (Ionescu 336)
109.	*Sandrina*	1		secular name, hypocoristic (Ionescu 24)
110.	Sânziana		1	secular name (Ionescu 349–350)
111.	Sara		1	saint name (Bercaru 105)
112.	Sarolta		1	secular name of Hungarian origin
113.	*Sarona*	1		secular name
114.	*Sigrid*	1		secular name of Norwegian, Swedish or Danish origin
115.	Silvica		1	secular name, derivative form (Paşca 321)
116.	Sînziana		1	secular name (Ionescu 349–350)
117.	*Smara*	1		secular name
118.	*Stela*	1		Catholic calendar name (Paşca 325, Bercaru 104)
119.	*Steliana*	1		Saint name (Ionescu 355, Bercaru 104)
120.	Tatiana		1	saint name (Bercaru 105)
121.	Teresita		1	secular name, Spanish hypocoristic
122.	*Thalida*	1		secular name, possibly German derivative
123.	*Thea*	1		secular name, hypocoristic form of *Dorothea, Althea*
124.	*Theona*	1		secular name
125.	Timeea		1	secular name, Romanian spelling variant of Italian *Timea*
126.	*Tincuța*	1		secular name, diminutive of *Catinca*
127.	*Traiana*	1		secular name, derived from masculine *Traian*
128.	*Valerica*	1		Catholic saint name, derivative (Paşca 345)
129.	*Varvara*	1		saint name (Bercaru 106)
130.	Vasilca		1	secular name, derivative (Bercaru 107)
131.	Victoria		1	Catholic saint name (Bercaru 107)
132.	*Viviana*	1		secular name (Ionescu 397)
133.	Zenaida		1	saint name (Ionescu 402, Bercaru,107)

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

Among the most exotic and original names, we find *Anais*, *Avril*, *Else*, *Elyda*, *Emima*, *Lugiana*, *Neili*, *Rabiha*, *Sarolta*, *Smara* and *Thalida*. Some of them are of erudite origin (inspired by mythological and literary characters – *Ariadna*, *Casandra*, *Clarissa*, *Cezara*, *Medeea*, *Otilia*, *Nefertiti* and *Persida*); others are given after popular culture celebrities or characters (*Aurora*, *Brenda*, *Ella*, *Naomi*, *Patricia*, *Roberta* and *Sabrina*). They can betray the romantic nature of their mothers (Burci 2014: 838) or their aspiration that the girls have a fulfilling life and destiny, similar to the one of celebrities.

Conclusions

After systematising the 278 names that we have identified for the 2281 girls aged 14–15 at the time of their high-school (college) admission, we could prove that most of the assumptions made at the beginning of our study can be validated.

The tendency towards giving saint and calendar names for girls as the only first name or in two-name combinations continues to manifest very strongly in the post-Communist period. The main explanation lies in the fact that Moldavians are religious people who respect family traditions and after 1989 they could freely manifest their spirituality. Christian names are definitely part of the legacy that the elderly pass on to their descendants for generations, so they come to celebrate both the living and the dead at important religious holidays and strengthen their family ties and genealogical continuity by means of namesakes.

The impressive number of modern names (most of them of foreign origin) that are uniquely attributed to female bearers is indicative of another trend which tends to prevail: the gradual neologisation of the Romanian anthroponymic stock (Burci 2014: 843) under the influence of globalisation/internationalisation and of the onomastic freedom of choosing affective and celebratory names of any origin. We may feel this is a sign of natural progress that equally affects rural and urban areas, but there is a risk of crossing common sense boundaries for the sake of individualisation and originality.

Bibliography

Bercaru, A. 2007. Nume feminine de origine laică în antroponimia românească. *Romanoslavica XLII*: 169–181. http://www.diacronia.ro/ro/indexing/details/V3924/pdf (accessed August 20, 2017).

Bercaru, A. 2014. *Antroponimele feminine la sârbi şi români*. Bucureşti: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti.

Bolocan, Gh. 1999. Prenumele actuale – inventar şi repartiţie teritorială. *SCO*, no. 4, Craiova, pp. 369–412.

Burci, I. 2014. The neologisation of the Romanian first names in the context of the actual evolutions. Causes, sources, modalities. In *The Proceedings of the International Conference "Communication, Context, Interdisciplinarity", Section: Language and Discourse*, vol. 3, 836–843. Târgu-Mureş: "Petru Maior" University Press.

Constantinescu, N.A. 1963. *Dicţionar onomastic românesc*. Bucureşti: Editura Academiei.

Graur, Al. 1965. *Nume de persoane*. Bucureşti: Ştiinţifică.

Ionescu, C. 2001. *Dicţionar de onomastică*. Bucureşti: Elion.

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)

la Stella, Enzo. 1993. *Santi e Fanti – dizionario dei nomi di persona*. Bologna: Zanichelli.
Morăraşu, N.N. & L. Drugă. 2011. Projecting the ethnic identity of Romanian Gypsies/Roma through contemporary first name-giving practices. *Onoma* 46: 77–96.
Pătruţ, I. 1980. *Onomastică românească*. Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică.
Petrache, T. 2000. *Dicţionar enciclopedic al numelor de botez: cu un table alphabetic al sfinţilor ortodocşi*. Bucureşti: Anastasia.
Reguş, A. & C. Reguş. 1999. *Nume de femei în vechi acte istorice (sec. XIV – XVI)*. Bucureşti: a Mustang.
Topor-Marin, A. 2003. Raportul dintre numele de botez calendaristice şi cele laice în sistemul antroponimic actual din Dobrogea. În *Aspecte ale dinamicii limbii române actuale. Actele colocviului Catedrei de Limba Română*, Gabriela Pană Dindelegan (ed.). Bucureşti: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti. http://www.diacronia.ro/ro/indexing/details/V3924/pdf (accessed August 14, 2017).

Websites (accessed January-March 2017)

http://admitere.edu.ro/
http://www.diane.ro/2008/09/dictionar-de-prenume-litera.html
http://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/social/numele-preferate-de-romani–656050
https://www.romania-insider.com/popular-baby-names-romania/

BDD-V4399 © 2017 Editura Mega, Editura Argonaut
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.239 (2026-11-04 06:27:00 UTC)