

Popular Names in Ottoman Istanbul

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This paper examines how popular names changed in Ottoman Istanbul over time. We use information from Istanbul court registers for the period between the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries. The dataset consists of the names of individuals involved in court business, such as litigants, witnesses, representatives, and the names of everyone's fathers--recorded for identification. The dataset includes a total of about 650,000 names, about 20,000 of which are unique. We identify the most common names in each century and examine how popular names changed over time, broken down by gender and religion. To explore whether the names of individuals who use the courts represented those of the general population, we analyze differences across case-types (e.g., probate vs. criminal), role in court (e.g., plaintiff vs. defendant or witness), generations (father vs. son), and status (honorific titled vs. title-less individuals).