

Ashley and Michael are city's most popular baby names

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Move over Emily - Ashley is back on top.

Ashley was the No. 1 name for girls born in the city last year, knocking Emily to No. 2 and reclaiming the title it held from 1992 to 2002.

Michael was still the most popular name for boys, a spot it has held since 1980.

Rounding out the top five for girls were Isabella, Sarah and Kayla. And for boys, the other most popular choices were Daniel, Matthew, Joshua and Justin.

"What is striking is the enduring name of Michael," said Mitchell Moss, a New York University urban planning professor. "Having a mayor named Michael Bloomberg has helped, and Michael works for multiple cultures."

Parents also are getting creative, looking at geography for inspiration.

The names Egypt, India, Sydney and London all made the charts. And Brooklyn is the only borough that can claim naming rights for city babies.

"Naming a child after a place allows them to transcend gender lines," Moss said.

Hollywood also left its mark: Angelina, Britney, Paris and Lindsay made the top 125.

So did gems like Amber, Jade and Ruby.

The annual list of most popular names was released yesterday by the city Department of Health and is based on the birth certificates of the 125,506 babies born in the five boroughs last year.

The city's favorite names mirror the national picks. The most popular names in the U.S. last year for boys were Jacob, Michael and Joshua. For girls, Emily, Madison and Isabella were tops, according to the Social Security Administration.