Over 90% of the 45,602 known surnames in the United Kingdom are native Britain and Ireland...

- 50% are locative names such as Green, Leicester, and Sutton
- 23% are relationship names like Dawson, Phelps, and Edrich
- 19% are nicknames like Fox, Longbones, and Goodfellow
- 8% are occupational names such as Tanner, Webster, and Franklin

And as the population increases, common surnames are becoming even more common...

Sometimes this is because a recent immigrant surname has taken an English surname form...

But names with such high frequencies are still comparatively rare...

90% had fewer than 1,000 bearers in 1881
85% had fewer than 500 bearers in 1881

In other words, it was (and still is) common to have an uncommon surname!

These facts and more can be found in The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland, the ultimate reference work on family names of the UK.