

# The names leaving American obituaries the fastest

Not the baby-name list. Between 2015 and 2026 the women's names of the early 1920s fell by about half on the death page. Mabel is the fastest, -59.4%. Mildred, once ordinary in any Saturday paper, is -51.2%, from about 9,040 deaths a year to 4,410. Dorothy loses the most notices: about 9,000 fewer modeled deaths a year.

Patricia is not an endangered obituary name. Modeled deaths rose from 18,400 to 30,000. Linda rose from 11,900 to 27,400. Michael, the largest arrival, went from 22,600 to 43,300. The baby-name headlines have the death page backwards.

RATE OF EXIT

## Fastest off the page

Share of modeled deaths lost from 2015 to 2026, among names with at least about 1,200 modeled deaths in 2015. Counts are rounded. Cohort is the birth year contributing the most deaths in 2015.

| #  | Name      | Who   | Cohort | 2015  | 2026  | Change |
|----|-----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1  | Mabel     | Women | 1921   | 1,520 | 620   | -59.4% |
| 2  | Gertrude  | Women | 1922   | 2,660 | 1,130 | -57.5% |
| 3  | Opal      | Women | 1922   | 1,310 | 580   | -55.7% |
| 4  | Blanche   | Women | 1923   | 1,230 | 550   | -55.1% |
| 5  | Genevieve | Women | 1923   | 1,550 | 740   | -52.5% |
| 6  | Pearl     | Women | 1924   | 2,080 | 1,000 | -51.8% |
| 7  | Myrtle    | Women | 1922   | 1,980 | 960   | -51.3% |
| 8  | Mildred   | Women | 1924   | 9,040 | 4,410 | -51.2% |
| 9  | Florence  | Women | 1924   | 5,540 | 2,700 | -51.2% |
| 10 | Viola     | Women | 1924   | 2,120 | 1,060 | -49.9% |
| 11 | Agnes     | Women | 1924   | 2,540 | 1,270 | -49.8% |
| 12 | Violet    | Women | 1924   | 1,900 | 990   | -48.2% |
| 13 | Muriel    | Women | 1925   | 1,210 | 630   | -47.9% |
| 14 | Gladys    | Women | 1924   | 4,690 | 2,490 | -47.0% |
| 15 | Hazel     | Women | 1924   | 3,900 | 2,070 | -46.9% |

ABSOLUTE LOSS

## Names a desk will stop seeing

A steep percentage on a smaller name is not the same as thousands of notices gone.

| # | Name     | Who   | Cohort | 2015   | 2026   | Fewer |
|---|----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Dorothy  | Women | 1924   | 24,200 | 15,200 | 9,000 |
| 2 | Helen    | Women | 1924   | 19,000 | 10,600 | 8,420 |
| 3 | Ruth     | Women | 1924   | 14,700 | 9,090  | 5,590 |
| 4 | Mildred  | Women | 1924   | 9,040  | 4,410  | 4,630 |
| 5 | Margaret | Women | 1924   | 19,000 | 15,400 | 3,660 |
| 6 | Anna     | Women | 1924   | 8,790  | 5,530  | 3,260 |
| 7 | Evelyn   | Women | 1924   | 8,580  | 5,540  | 3,050 |
| 8 | Virginia | Women | 1924   | 12,100 | 9,140  | 3,000 |

MEN

Elmer leads the men

Men's classic names were reused, so John, James, Robert, and William never clear the page. The names that leave are the one-generation ones.

| #  | Name     | Cohort | 2015  | 2026  | Change |
|----|----------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1  | Elmer    | 1927   | 1,880 | 1,030 | -45.5% |
| 2  | Herbert  | 1929   | 3,760 | 2,660 | -29.4% |
| 3  | Leo      | 1927   | 2,390 | 1,690 | -29.1% |
| 4  | Willard  | 1927   | 1,250 | 890   | -28.9% |
| 5  | Chester  | 1924   | 1,740 | 1,260 | -27.6% |
| 6  | Clarence | 1927   | 4,400 | 3,190 | -27.5% |
| 7  | Herman   | 1927   | 2,010 | 1,500 | -25.4% |
| 8  | Wallace  | 1927   | 1,350 | 1,010 | -25.4% |
| 9  | Harold   | 1928   | 9,290 | 7,020 | -24.4% |
| 10 | Sam      | 1926   | 1,440 | 1,100 | -23.3% |
| 11 | Earl     | 1927   | 4,460 | 3,430 | -23.0% |
| 12 | Harry    | 1927   | 5,840 | 4,500 | -22.8% |

THE OTHER DIRECTION

Names about to fill the page

Boomer given names are entering the ages when most Americans die. This is the workload coming at a notice desk.

| #  | Name     | Who   | Cohort | 2015   | 2026   | Change  |
|----|----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1  | Michael  | Men   | 1952   | 22,600 | 43,300 | +91.7%  |
| 2  | David    | Men   | 1947   | 27,400 | 44,900 | +63.9%  |
| 3  | Linda    | Women | 1947   | 11,900 | 27,400 | +130.7% |
| 4  | Patricia | Women | 1941   | 18,400 | 30,000 | +63.6%  |
| 5  | Barbara  | Women | 1938   | 20,800 | 30,900 | +48.3%  |
| 6  | Susan    | Women | 1948   | 7,050  | 16,000 | +126.3% |
| 7  | James    | Men   | 1930   | 59,800 | 68,400 | +14.3%  |
| 8  | Sandra   | Women | 1942   | 6,970  | 15,200 | +117.4% |
| 9  | Mark     | Men   | 1956   | 6,990  | 15,200 | +116.8% |
| 10 | Gary     | Men   | 1947   | 9,430  | 17,500 | +86.0%  |
| 11 | Carol    | Women | 1942   | 9,920  | 17,700 | +78.6%  |
| 12 | Karen    | Women | 1943   | 5,470  | 12,900 | +136.4% |

SAME SPELLING, NEW BABIES

## Leaving funerals, back in nurseries

A few names falling on the death page are rising again on birth certificates. The people dying are not the babies.

| Name      | Deaths 2026 | Change | Babies 2024 |
|-----------|-------------|--------|-------------|
| Violet    | 990         | -48.2% | 6,970       |
| Hazel     | 2,070       | -46.9% | 6,400       |
| Elsie     | 1,500       | -46.3% | 1,900       |
| Josephine | 2,800       | -40.7% | 3,750       |

DO NOT MIX THESE UP

## Already gone from birth announcements

Drops among babies, 2014 to 2024. These people are mostly still alive. They are not leaving obituaries. Included so the two lists stay separate.

| #  | Name      | Who   | 2014 babies | 2024 babies | Change |
|----|-----------|-------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| 1  | Alexa     | Women | 4,249       | 348         | -91.8% |
| 2  | Jase      | Men   | 3,751       | 438         | -88.3% |
| 3  | Annabella | Women | 1,280       | 174         | -86.4% |
| 4  | Alexis    | Women | 4,246       | 604         | -85.8% |
| 5  | Katelyn   | Women | 1,923       | 283         | -85.3% |
| 6  | Gage      | Men   | 1,945       | 297         | -84.7% |
| 7  | Aubree    | Women | 4,279       | 773         | -81.9% |
| 8  | Brantley  | Men   | 3,353       | 640         | -80.9% |
| 9  | Conner    | Men   | 1,639       | 320         | -80.5% |
| 10 | Annabelle | Women | 4,363       | 891         | -79.6% |

METHOD

## How a death gets counted

Expected deaths in a year are the sum of SSA births in each earlier year times the chance a person of that sex dies at the resulting age. The life table is Gompertz-Makeham, calibrated to a modern U.S. period table (female life expectancy about 82, male about 77). It is not a count of obituaries published by any one website. The same survival schedule is used for every cohort; people born before 1940 really died younger, so the oldest names have left the page at least this fast.

Source: U.S. Social Security Administration national baby-name files, 1880-2024 (public domain), weighted by a sex-specific period life table.

Female  $e_0 \sim 81.9$ , modal age at death 88. Male  $e_0 \sim 76.6$ , modal age at death 84. The same schedule is used for every birth year.

People born before 1937 are undercounted if they never received a Social Security number. The oldest names have left the page at least this fast, and possibly faster. Debra is not Deborah: spellings are separate, as the SSA publishes them. The 2020-2021 mortality spike is not modeled, so the curve is smoother than the papers were. Figures are modeled deaths, not a count of obituaries on Legacy.com or in any funeral home.

#### FOR THE WEBSITE

### Hand off to the Notice Near By bot

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Implement the route /names/leaving-the-page from the companion file notice-nearby-handoff.json. Lead with this obituary ranking. Do not recast Patricia, Linda, Susan, or Karen as names disappearing from death notices. Do not lead with Alexa or Katelyn. Keep the pre-1937 caveat on the page. Palette: paper #F3EEE4, ink #1C1915, carmine #8F3D32. Type: Newsreader and Source Sans 3. Voice: local-news desk. Say died.