



LANDSCAPE OF MATERNAL MORTALITY AND WIC

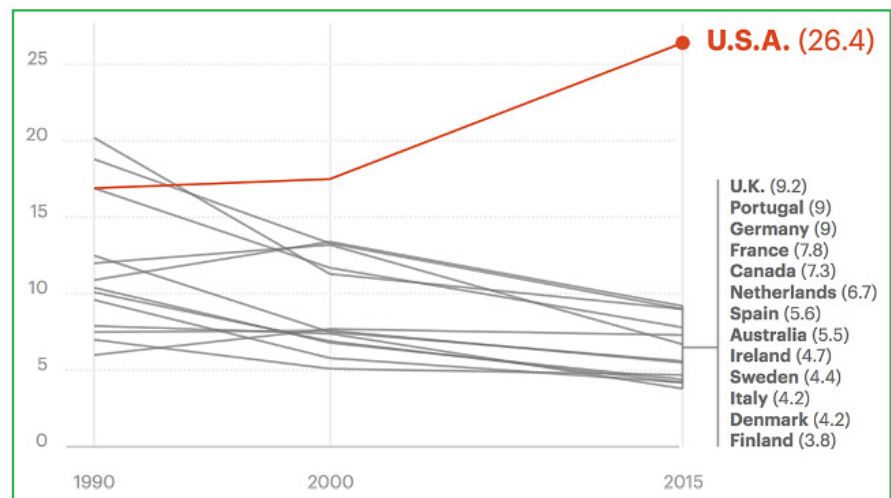
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) define maternal mortality as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 1 year of the end of pregnancy, regardless of the outcome, duration or site of pregnancy—from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.¹ With 26.4 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015, the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of any industrialized country.²

Even more unsettling is the fact that considerable racial disparities clearly exist with respect to maternal mortality. From 2011 – 2016, the pregnancy-related mortality ratios were:³

- » Black non-Hispanic women: 42.4 per 100,000 live births
- » American Indian/Alaska Native women: 30.4 per 100,000 live births
- » Asian/Pacific Islander non-Hispanic women: 14.1 per 100,000 live births
- » White women: 13.0 deaths per 100,000 live births
- » Hispanic women: 11.3 deaths per 100,000 live births



FIGURE 1. MATERNAL MORTALITY RATES 1990-2015



Source: Graph originally published online: <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/12/528098789/u-s-has-the-worst-rate-of-maternal-deaths-in-the-developed-world>.

Data for this graph: GBD 2015 Maternal Mortality Collaboration (2016) Global, regional, and national levels of maternal mortality, 1990–2015: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2015. *The Lancet*: Vol. 388 Issue 10053, pp.1775–1812. Accessed online: [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)31470-2.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(16)31470-2.pdf).

IN FACT, THE CDC ESTIMATES THAT 59% OF THE MATERNAL DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES SHOULD BE PREVENTABLE.⁴

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MATERNAL MORTALITY

The explanation for each of these factors are available in NWA's Maternal Mortality Task Force's full report, *The Role of WIC in Reducing Maternal Mortality*. Some contributing factors regarding maternal mortality are listed below:

- » Racial and Ethnic Considerations
- » Social Determinants of Health
- » Generational and Social Factors

To reduce maternal mortality requires concerted efforts to ensure the highest quality and safety of healthcare, including maternity care, for all women.

The Maternal Mortality Task Force convened to examine available evidence regarding WIC participation and maternal mortality to identify promising practices for helping to address the issue in WIC.⁵ Below are the task force's recommendations for the WIC community which are organized into three overarching buckets for implementation into WIC programs:

- » Staff Training
- » Direct Services to Families
- » Advocacy & Partnerships

CONCLUSION

The roles that WIC plays—now and in the future—in addressing maternal mortality are paramount. As a program that serves almost 2 million low-income pregnant and postpartum women, WIC is a vital mechanism to help reduce maternal mortality. WIC

already devotes attention to many of the factors contributing to maternal mortality, including those relevant to the social determinants of health and health equity. However, it will involve a concerted and collaborative effort from individuals, organizations, programs, and legislators nationwide to reduce maternal mortality and improve maternal and birth outcomes.

To learn more, please see the full report which includes suggestions related to the task force's recommendations such as cul-

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System. Accessed online: <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>.

²GBD 2015 Maternal Mortality Collaboration (2016) Global, regional, and national levels of maternal mortality, 1990–2015: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2015. *The Lancet*: Vol. 388 Issue 10053, pp. 1775–1812. Available online: [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)31470-2.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(16)31470-2.pdf).

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018) Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System. Accessed online: <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pmss.html>.

⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Foundation (2017) Report from Maternal Mortality Review Committees: A View into Their Critical Role. Available online: <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/MMRIReport.pdf>.

⁵National WIC Association (2019) Maternal Mortality in the US: The Role of WIC in Addressing the Crisis. Accessed online: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/2019-wic-maternal-mortality.pdf>.

