

What Does Maternal Mortality Rate Tell Us About Contemporary USA?

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Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) (measured per 100,000 live births) is a widely used human development indicator. In addition this also has a strong emotional connect and any country would normally be very keen to accord very high priority to reducing its maternal mortality.

Therefore it is surprising to see that the USA with its enormous resources has in recent times persistently recorded one of the highest MMR among all the developed countries, often the highest rate among comparable rich countries.

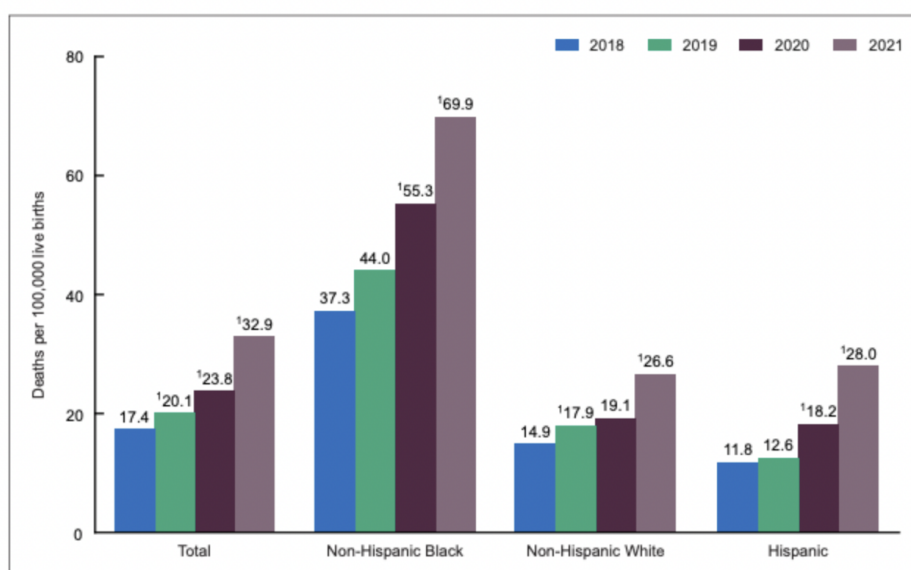
A Commonwealth Foundation paper titled '[US Maternal Mortality Crisis Continues to Worsen](#)' By [Munira Gunja, Evan D. Gumas and Reginald Williams](#) (dated December 1, 2022) gives the following comparison with some comparable developed countries regarding MMR:

1. Netherlands—1.2
2. Australia—2.0
3. Japan—2.7
4. USA—23.8

Further this paper compares different groups within the USA.

1. USA Whites—19.1
2. USA Blacks—55.3

Maternal mortality rates by race and Hispanic origin: United States, 2018-2021



Source: Donna L. Hoyert, Ph.D., Division of Vital Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics. [Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021](#)

Another report with a somewhat similar title 'US Maternal Mortality Rate Continues to Worsen' written by Emily Harris and published in JAMA on March 29, 2023 says that MMR in the USA in recent years has continued to rise from 17.4 to 20.1 to 23.8 in 2020. Further, this report says, this has increased to 32.9 in 2021 (note—this may be an abnormally high jump due to exceptional conditions of the pandemic when normal health services were not available to many).

It is also important to look at the trends of the last two decades or so.

The WHO has published the MMR of almost all the countries for the period 2000 to 2020. This table shows that there are very few countries in the entire world where the MMR shows an increasing trend. The USA is one of these few countries and among these countries with such a regrettable record it is one of the leading offenders. There are only three other countries in the entire world which have a worse record than the USA in terms of a higher rate of increase of MMR. These are mostly countries which suffered due to adverse external and economic factors. However the USA recorded a very high rate of increase of MMR despite enjoying conditions of world dominance.

During this period 2000-2020 the MMR of the USA increased from 12 to 21. For comparison, we may look at Russia which despite many adverse factors and obstructions created by powerful outside forces recorded a decline of MMR from 52 to 14 during this same period 2000-2020, according to the same set of WHO data contained in the same table of MMR data for all countries of the world.

This table also has a column on the rate of change of MMR recorded during 2000-2020. The rate of INCREASE of MMR in the USA during this period is 77.9 per cent. For comparison we may look at Russia which has recorded a DECREASE of 73.6 per cent, Vietnam which has recorded a DECREASE of 46% and India which has recorded a DECREASE of 73.5 per cent.

It is important to note that in the course of relentless pursuit of dominance involving one

war after another (which have killed millions of people including countless mothers in distant countries), the USA has forgotten to take care of essential welfare needs of its own people and such high MMR is only one manifestation of this. The peace movement in the USA should link the stopping of USA's never-ending wars to the achievement of significant welfare goals within the USA, particularly those concerning women and children, the poor and the homeless.

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