

Highly educated Black women experience poorer maternal outcomes

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Black mothers with a master's or doctorate degree experienced some of the worst birth outcomes, compared to Black mothers with less education and white mothers with the same or less education, according

to a new study. The research will be presented at the [Pediatric Academic Societies \(PAS\) 2023 Meeting](#), held April 27-May 1 in Washington, D.C.

Researchers examined how [educational achievement](#) and race affected preterm births and low birth weights for babies born to non-Hispanic Black and [white women](#) over the age of 25. The study used birth certificate records obtained from the Ohio Department of Health within Franklin County, Ohio from 2016 to 2021.

As education increased, the Black-White racial disparities in birth outcomes worsened. More than 10% of Black mothers with a master's degree or doctorate had a preterm or very preterm birth, compared to less than 6% of white mothers with the same level of education. Low birth weight was more common for babies born to Black individuals with an advanced degree (9.58%), compared to white individuals (3.56%) with a master's degree or doctorate.

According to the study, Black mothers with an advanced degree had similar outcomes (10.39% preterm or very preterm birth; 9.58% low [birth](#) weight) to white mothers with a high school degree (10.48% preterm or very [preterm birth](#); 8.26% [low birth weight](#)).

"As we continue to grapple with the Black maternal health crisis, the results of this study highlight an overlooked inequity that we must pay attention to," said Kierra S. Barnett, Ph.D., M.P.H., research scientist at the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, and presenting author. "There is a clear disconnect between the benefits we assume education should have on our health and what educated Black mothers are experiencing in our society."

Table 1. Percent Preterm, Very Preterm and Low Birth Weight by Race and Education (N= 58,391)

	Non-Hispanic Black			Non-Hispanic White		
	Preterm Birth	Very Preterm Birth	Low Birth Weight	Preterm Birth	Very Preterm Birth	Low Birth Weight
< High School	7.95	1.42	8.40	12.47	3.18	14.13
High school	9.22	2.30	10.60	8.70	1.78	8.26
Some college	8.66	2.33	10.23	6.87	1.23	5.68
Bachelor's degree	6.96	1.65	7.32	5.16	0.58	3.79
Masters or Doctorate	8.54	2.39	9.58	5.02	0.55	3.56

Table 2. Adjusted Odds Ratios from Generalized Linear Mixed Models (N= 58,391)

	Preterm (<37 Weeks)	Very Preterm (<32 Weeks)	Low Birth Weight (<2,500g)
	Adjusted Odds Ratio [95% CI]	Adjusted Odds Ratio [95% CI]	Adjusted Odds Ratio [95% CI]
< High School			
Non-Hispanic White	Reference	Reference	Reference
Non-Hispanic Black	0.67 [0.55 – 0.82] ***	0.51 [0.34 – 0.78] **	0.61 [0.5 – 0.74] ***
High school			
Non-Hispanic White	Reference	Reference	Reference
Non-Hispanic Black	1 [0.87 – 1.15]	1.32 [0.99 – 1.77] †	1.22 [1.06 – 1.4] **
Some college			
Non-Hispanic White	Reference	Reference	Reference
Non-Hispanic Black	1.11 [0.97 – 1.26]	1.69 [1.29 – 2.21] ***	1.6 [1.4 – 1.82] ***
Bachelor's Degree			
Non-Hispanic White	Reference	Reference	Reference
Non-Hispanic Black	1.09 [0.91 – 1.3]	2.23 [1.5 – 3.29] ***	1.56 [1.3 – 1.87] ***
Masters or Doctorate Degree			
Non-Hispanic White	Reference	Reference	Reference
Non-Hispanic Black	1.35 [1.07 – 1.69] **	3.51 [2.2 – 5.61] ***	2.20 [1.76 – 2.76] ***

***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; † p < 0.10.

Study authors called for additional [research](#) to assess alternate factors contributing to poor maternal health outcomes for Black women and immediate solutions to minimize the burden on Black families.

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