

US maternal mortality returned to pre-pandemic level in 2022

May 2 2024



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The US maternal mortality rate in 2022 returned to the same level as two years prior, after a spike in 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, health authorities announced Thursday.

The "positive news" is however also "sobering," said Verda Hicks,

president of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

"We are reminded, again, that we are nowhere near resolving the issue of [maternal mortality](#), particularly when trying to close the gap on [health care disparities](#)," she said.

Maternal mortality is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a death occurring during pregnancy or within 42 days of the end of pregnancy, from a cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management.

In 2022, US health authorities recorded 817 deaths falling under that definition, a sharp drop from the 1,205 in 2021—and around the same number as 2020, which was 861.

The maternal mortality rate, expressed as the number of deaths per 100,000 births, was therefore 22.3 in 2022, compared with 32.9 in 2021.

However, the rate remains much higher than that reported by other advanced-economy countries.

As noted by Hicks, disparities between populations also remain considerable: the rate was 49.5 deaths per 100,000 births among Black Americans in 2022, compared with 19 deaths among white people.

Hicks said that the overall spike observed during the pandemic was linked to difficulties in accessing care for patients, but also "worsening racial health inequities."

She also warned of a "worsening state of reproductive health care" following the US Supreme Court's decision to overturn the nationwide right to abortion in summer 2022.

"ACOG remains concerned about a potential increase in maternal deaths in states where pregnant people are unable to access care," Hicks said, citing "tragic reports of maternal morbidities that have resulted from untreated pregnancy complications."

Women in several states where abortion has been outlawed have filed lawsuits after being denied the procedure despite serious health issues, saying their doctors feared prosecution.

"When treating pregnancy complications, abortion care can be lifesaving, and withholding that care unquestionably compromises patient lives and outcomes," Hicks added.

On Monday, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced \$100 million in funding to support around 100 organizations working to improve maternal and child health in the country.

"Maternal health is a fundamental human right and every mother deserves access to quality care and support. Having a safe and healthy [pregnancy](#) and birth shouldn't depend on the color of your skin, what language you speak at home, or where you live," HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a statement.

© 2024 AFP

Citation: US maternal mortality returned to pre-pandemic level in 2022 (2024, May 2) retrieved 30 June 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-05-maternal-mortality-pre-pandemic.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.