

# Many US women unhappy with maternal health care, poll finds

June 6 2024, by Dennis Thompson

---



Many women are unhappy with the state of U.S. maternal health care, but a major new poll finds most Americans don't understand how badly the nation lags behind other wealthy countries in this area.

Only about 2 in 5 (42%) women currently pregnant or ever pregnant strongly felt they had access to the best possible medical care while pregnant, down significantly from 50% in 2022, according to The Harris Poll's second annual survey on the [state of maternal health care](#).

Women reported similar numbers regarding their health care while [giving birth](#). About 44% felt they had access to the best possible medical care during delivery, down from 52% in 2022, results show.

"These results confirm that pregnancy and birth care in the United States is on the decline, and there is much room for improvement," said Christina Lojek, research manager, media and communications research, at The Harris Poll.

Despite this, Americans were still likely to rank U.S. [maternal care](#) better than it actually is, when compared to that of other high-income countries, the poll found.

For example, only about 1 in 4 (29%) Americans surveyed correctly stated that the United States does 'not' have one of the lowest rates of infant mortality among developed countries.

In fact, the United States has the highest rate of infant mortality among wealthy nations, at 5.4 deaths for every 1,000 live births, a 2022 Commonwealth Fund [report](#) shows. The next leading countries are Canada (4.5 infant deaths), New Zealand (4.3), The Netherlands (3.8) and the United Kingdom (3.6).

Similarly, only about 2 in 5 (40%) Americans knew that the country has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality.

Maternal mortality rates in the United States are double and sometimes triple that of other wealthy nations, according to a Commonwealth Fund

[report](#) issued earlier this week.

U.S. women had a maternal death rate from complications of pregnancy and childbirth of 22 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2022, the report said. The death rate of Black American women was even worse, at nearly 50 deaths per 100,000 [live births](#).

But only half of all Americans (50%) and just 57% of Black Americans know that Black women are nearly three times as likely as [white women](#) to die from pregnancy-related causes, the poll found.

"Overall, Americans are poorly informed about giving birth in the U.S., specifically surrounding risks and complications, especially for Black women," the poll stated.

The poll also found that many U.S. women develop health problems during pregnancy, for which they need good care.

Nearly 3 in 5 (57%) women who are or have been pregnant said they were diagnosed with a [medical condition](#) between conception and after delivery. That includes about 1 in 3 (32%) who said they were diagnosed with anxiety, depression or another mental health condition.

Young women ages 18 to 34 were more than twice as likely as those ages 35 and older to have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (61% versus 26%), [poll results](#) showed.

About 1 in 5 (21%) women who sought help for their mental health problems said they either did not receive care or were unhappy with the care they got.

"So many women who have been pregnant dealt with mental health conditions during the pregnancy journey, and it is a bit jarring to learn

that 1 in 5 went untreated or weren't satisfied with the care they received," Lojek said.

Overall, the poll found that the United States has a poor track record when it comes to giving [pregnant women](#) the [health care](#) and support that they need.

More than half of women (53%) believed women like them have to fight to get the medical care they need, poll results showed.

Women between the ages of 18 and 44 were more likely than those aged 45+ to feel this way (67% versus 42%).

"Based on our survey results, it is evident that we as a country need to make access to pregnancy, birth and postpartum care, as well as best possible care, easier for all women, and areas of care improvement should be focused on patient education and support to ensure women have safer and improved outcomes," Lojek said.

The poll involved 2,061 U.S. adults surveyed between April 2 and 4, 2024. Of those, 1,116 were women and 692 were women who have been pregnant or given birth. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

**More information:** The March of Dimes has more on [maternal and infant health in the United States](#).

Copyright © 2024 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Many US women unhappy with maternal health care, poll finds (2024, June 6) retrieved 21 June 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-06-women-unhappy-maternal-health-poll.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.