

Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021

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This report presents maternal mortality rates for 2021 based on data from the National Vital Statistics System. A maternal death is defined by the World Health Organization as “the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and the site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes (1).” Maternal mortality rates, which are the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, are shown in this report by age group and race and Hispanic origin.

This report updates a previous one that showed maternal mortality rates for 2018–2020 (2). In 2021, 1,205 women died of maternal causes in the United States compared with 861 in 2020 and 754 in 2019 (2). The maternal mortality rate for 2021 was 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared with a rate of 23.8 in 2020 and 20.1 in 2019 (Table).

In 2021, the maternal mortality rate for non-Hispanic Black (subsequently, Black) women was 69.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, 2.6 times the rate for non-Hispanic White (subsequently, White) women (26.6) (Figure 1 and Table). Rates for Black women were significantly higher than rates for White and Hispanic women. The increases from 2020 to 2021 for all race and Hispanic-origin groups were significant.

Rates increased with maternal age. Rates in 2021 were 20.4 deaths per 100,000 live births for women under age 25, 31.3 for those aged 25–39, and 138.5 for those aged 40 and over (Figure 2 and Table). The rate for women aged 40 and over was 6.8 times higher than the rate for women under age 25. Differences in the rates between age groups were statistically significant. The increases in the rates between 2020 and 2021 for each of these age groups were statistically significant.

Data source and methods

Data are from the National Vital Statistics System mortality file (3). Consistent with previous reports, the number of maternal deaths does not include all deaths occurring to pregnant or recently pregnant women, but only deaths with the underlying cause of death assigned to *International Statistical Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision* code numbers A34, O00–O95, and O98–O99. Maternal mortality rates are per 100,000 live births, based on data



from the National Vital Statistics System natality file. Maternal mortality rates fluctuate from year to year because of the relatively small number of these events and possibly due to issues with the reporting of maternal deaths on death certificates (4). Efforts to improve data quality are ongoing, and these data will continue to be evaluated for possible errors. Data are shown for only the three largest race and Hispanic-origin groups for which statistically reliable rates can be calculated.

References

1. World Health Organization. International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems, 10th revision (ICD–10). 2008 ed. Geneva, Switzerland. 2009.
2. Hoyert DL. Maternal mortality rates in the United States, 2020. NCHS Health E-Stats. 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15620/cdc:113967>.
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4. Hoyert DL, Miniño AM. Maternal mortality in the United States: Changes in coding, publication, and data release, 2018. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 69 no 2. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2020.

Suggested citation

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Table. Number of live births, maternal deaths, and maternal mortality rates, by race and Hispanic origin and age: United States, 2018–2021

Race and Hispanic origin and age	2018			2019			2020			2021		
	Number of live births	Number of deaths	Maternal mortality rate ¹	Number of live births	Number of deaths	Maternal mortality rate ¹	Number of live births	Number of deaths	Maternal mortality rate ¹	Number of live births	Number of deaths	Maternal mortality rate ¹
Total ²	3,791,712	658	17.4	3,747,540	754	20.1	3,613,647	861	23.8	3,664,292	1,205	32.9
Under 25	907,782	96	10.6	877,803	111	12.6	825,403	114	13.8	797,334	163	20.4
25–39	2,756,974	458	16.6	2,739,976	544	19.9	2,658,445	607	22.8	2,731,223	854	31.3
40 and over	126,956	104	81.9	129,761	98	75.5	129,799	140	107.9	135,735	188	138.5
Non-Hispanic Black ³	552,029	206	37.3	548,075	241	44.0	529,811	293	55.3	517,889	362	69.9
Under 25	176,243	27	15.3	169,853	32	18.8	159,541	46	28.8	149,435	62	41.5
25–39	358,276	137	38.2	360,206	179	49.7	351,648	198	56.3	349,170	242	69.3
40 and over	17,510	42	239.9	18,016	30	166.5	18,622	49	263.1	19,284	58	300.8
Non-Hispanic White ³	1,956,413	291	14.9	1,915,912	343	17.9	1,843,432	352	19.1	1,887,656	503	26.6
Under 25	391,829	41	10.5	374,129	49	13.1	348,666	40	11.5	336,792	57	16.9
25–39	1,504,888	207	13.8	1,480,595	248	16.8	1,433,839	253	17.6	1,486,249	364	24.5
40 and over	59,696	43	72.0	61,188	46	75.2	60,927	59	96.8	64,615	82	126.9
Hispanic	886,210	105	11.8	886,467	112	12.6	866,713	158	18.2	885,916	248	28.0
Under 25	275,553	21	7.6	270,948	23	8.5	258,635	20	7.7	255,806	36	14.1
25–39	579,553	72	12.4	584,109	71	12.2	576,690	111	19.2	597,703	184	30.8
40 and over	31,104	12	*	31,410	18	*	31,388	27	86.0	32,407	28	86.4

* Rate does not meet National Center for Health Statistics standards of reliability.

¹Maternal mortality rates are deaths per 100,000 live births.

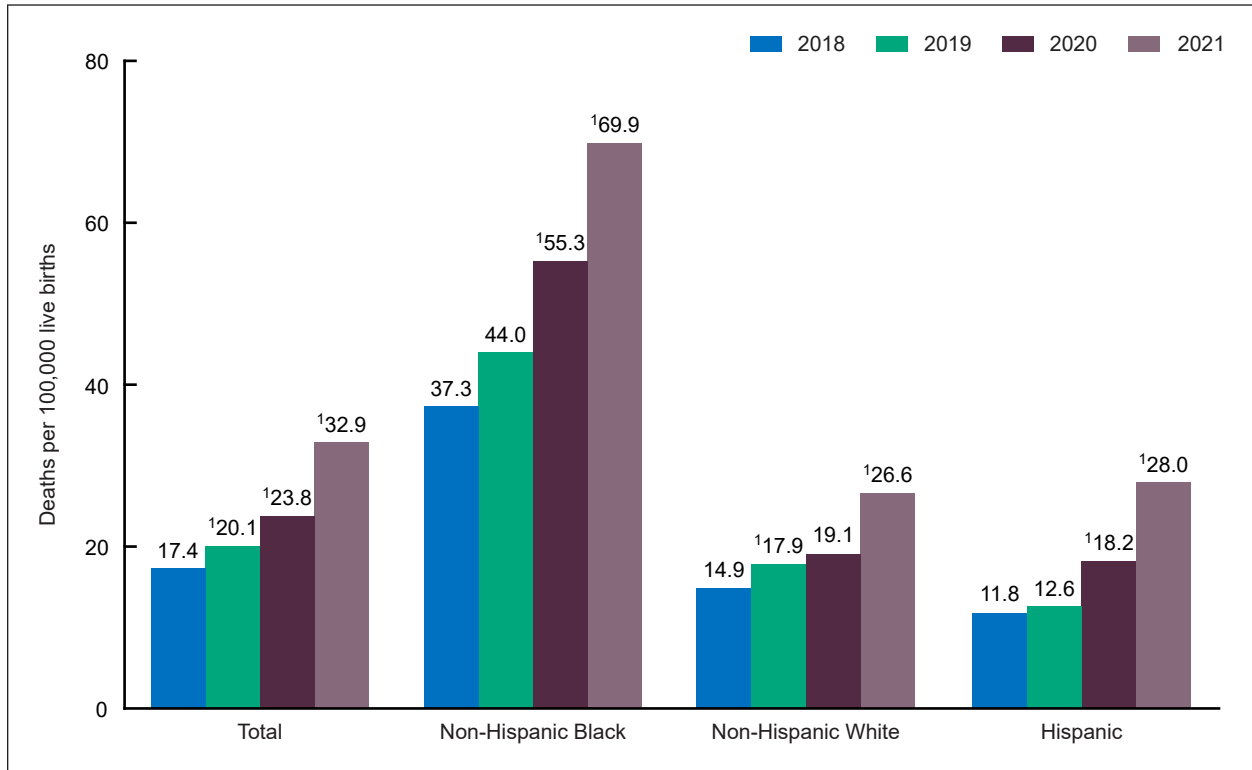
²Includes deaths for race and Hispanic-origin groups not shown separately, including women of multiple races and origin not stated.

³Race groups are single race.

NOTES: Maternal causes are those assigned to categories A34, O00–O95, and O98–O99 of the *International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision*. Maternal deaths occur while pregnant or within 42 days of being pregnant.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Natality and Mortality.

Figure 1. Maternal mortality rates, by race and Hispanic origin: United States, 2018–2021

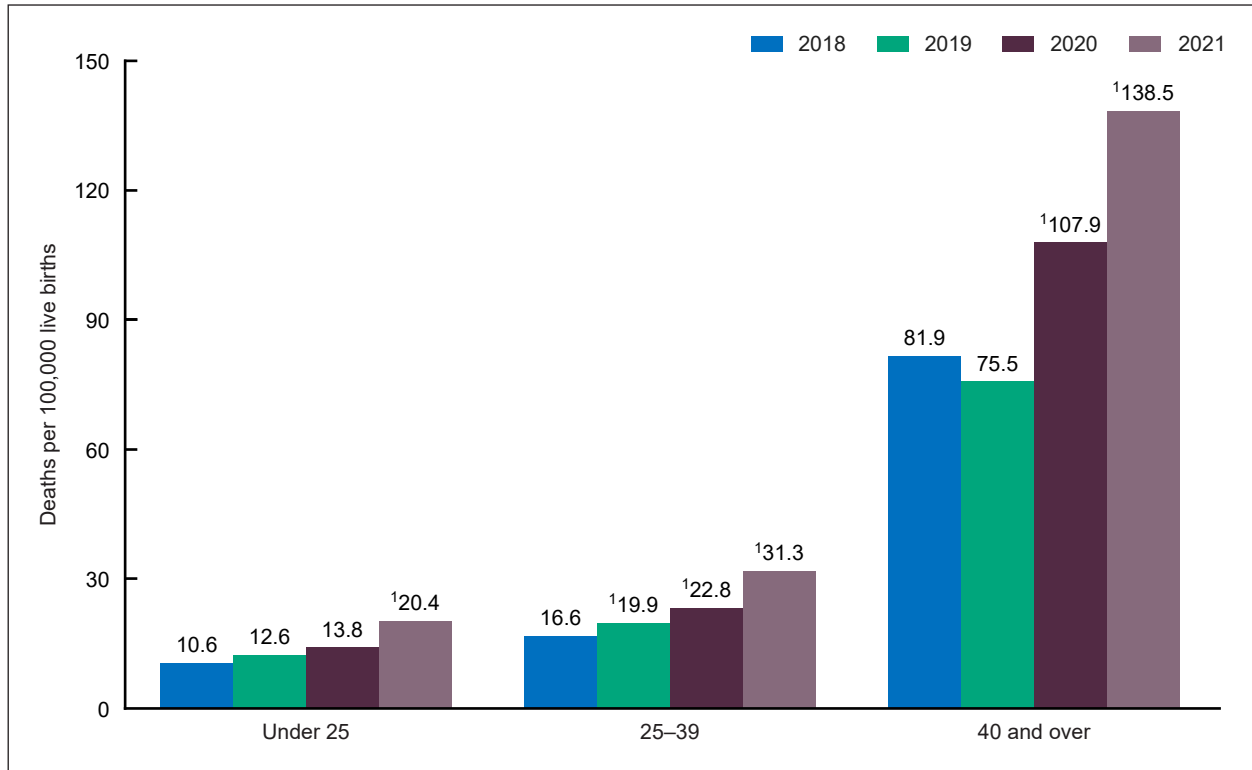


¹Statistically significant increase from previous year ($p < 0.05$).

NOTE: Race groups are single race.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

Figure 2. Maternal mortality rates, by age: United States, 2018–2021



¹Statistically significant increase from previous year ($p < 0.05$).
SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.