

## In This Issue:

### Advances in Maternal and Child Health

Omar A. Khan, MD, MHS<sup>1</sup> & Katherine Smith, MD, MPH<sup>2</sup>

1. Editor-in-Chief, Delaware Journal of Public Health

2. Publisher, Delaware Journal of Public Health

Maternal and infant mortality are high in the United States due to various intersecting public health issues like widespread chronic disease, systemic racism leading to disparities (especially for Black women and babies), inconsistent healthcare access, lack of paid maternity leave, and fragmented postpartum care.

According to the World Health Organization, in 2023, over 700 women died **per day** from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. That comes out to about 260,000 women per year, and over 90% of these occurred in low- and lower-middle income countries. Most could have been prevented.<sup>1</sup> This number had been declining worldwide since 2000, yet the United States was one of only seven countries to report that maternal mortality had increased.<sup>2</sup> While the causes are several, it is noteworthy that taken in aggregate, cardiovascular causes (including stroke, high blood pressure, and blood clots) account for nearly half the causes of maternal death, suggesting that improved control of pre-pregnancy cardiovascular risk factors is key for maternal health during pregnancy.

The Commonwealth Fund's 2025 Scorecard on State Health System Performance revealed the states with the highest maternal mortality rates (figure 1) had some of the worst overall health system performance. Delaware ranks smack in the middle of health system performance, at number 25, and showed an infant mortality rate of 7.5 per 1,000 live births in 2022 (up from 5.9 in 2018).<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1. United States Maternal Mortality Rates by State, 2025

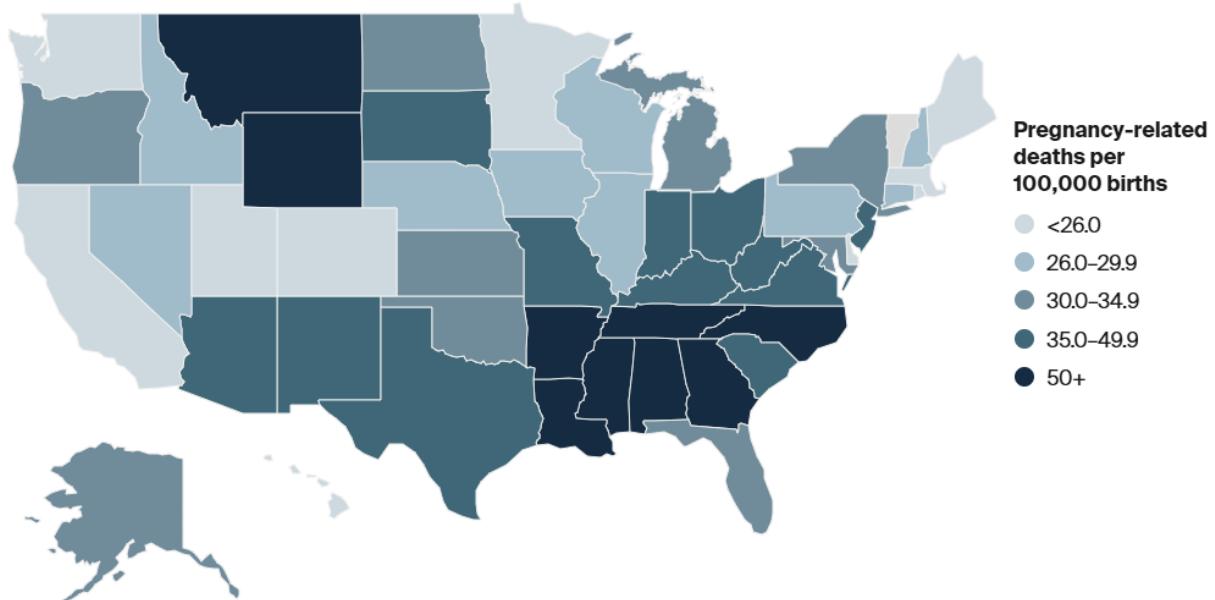


Figure reproduced from CDC data as presented in Reference 3

In the last several years, greater attention has been paid to global causes and solutions, many from right here in Delaware, some published in this Journal.<sup>4-6</sup> The causes of maternal death globally (such as postpartum hemorrhage and sepsis) are not so different from those in parts of the US, and are certainly amenable to system-wide solutions focusing on data, disparities, access to care, and addressing the underlying determinants of maternal health.<sup>6</sup>

In this issue of the Delaware Journal of Public Health, we welcome guest editor Audrey Merriam, MD, MS, a physician with the Delaware Center for Maternal and Fetal Medicine at ChristianaCare and program director for the Ob/Gyn Residency Program. Dr. Merriam has curated a comprehensive and informative issue highlighting maternal and child health in Delaware, and we thank her for her hard work.

As always, we look forward to your comments!

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