

# Black maternal morbidity and mortality in the US

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## What is the problem?

Maternal morbidity and mortality is any physical or mental illness, disability or death directly related to pregnancy and/or childbirth.

These numbers are much higher for black people in the US which is a crisis we need to address quickly (1).

### Maternal mortality per 100.000 births in US (2020) (1)

White 20,1

Black 55,3

## Racial bias and discrimination

Racial bias and discrimination are systemic mechanisms which exert control to cause health disparities and inequity. One of the contributing causes of the high Black maternal mortality rate is rooted in slavery, this is perpetuated and maintained by multiple additional factors (2). Institutional policies and practices play a role in shaping the social determinants of maternal morbidity and mortality in the US (3).

### Racial residential segregation

- Lacking stable housing (3).
- No suitable transportation (3).
- Limited access to health services (3).



### Unequitable healthcare system

- Weak doctor-patient relationship (3).
- Financial barriers to care (3).
- Shortage of healthcare professionals (3).



## Consequences

### Household and family:

Mortality and morbidity of a birthgiver can impact the child's emotional and physical growth and decrease the quality of life (4). It also affects the entire family or household, leading to lower income, diminished social support, and challenges with child-caring (4).

### Chronic stress for birthgiver:

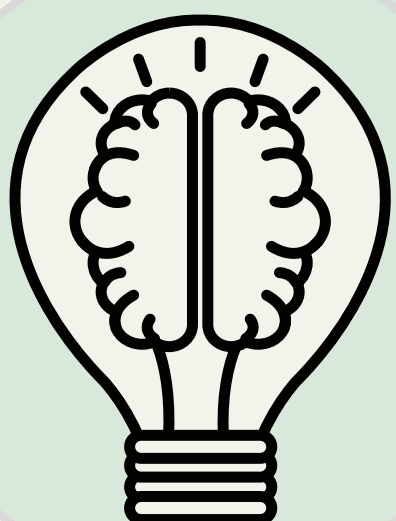
Many factors caused by racial bias and discrimination can result in early life stress exposure (3). This can result in wear and tear of the body, known as chronic stress.

### Distrust in healthcare system:

Birthgivers who have had poor experiences with medical care avoid seeking out help again in the future (3,5). Medical distrust is 73% higher in black adults as opposed to white adults (5). Subsequent generations are also more likely to distrust the healthcare system (3).

## What can we do?

- Be aware of the problem, which you are now;
- Addressing racial bias in social environments;
- Do a bias awareness training (2);
- Inform medical providers and teach (bio)medical students about problems rooted in structural racism (3).



Want to know more?

