

September 2021

Pregnancies and Pregnancy Outcomes in the United States

By the time women are in their 40s, approximately 85% will have become pregnant and experienced at least one birth,¹ 33% will have experienced a pregnancy loss,² and approximately 25% will have had an abortion.³ Miscarriages, defined as pregnancy losses before 20 weeks of gestation, are extremely common, occurring in an estimated 10% to 15% of all clinically confirmed pregnancies, with a much higher rate of 26% for all pregnancies.⁴ Stillbirths, defined as pregnancy losses after 20 weeks, occur in 0.6% of pregnancies.⁵

These experiences are overlapping and not exclusive. For example, 59% of the women under the age of 35 who have abortions are already mothers of one or more children.⁶ Of women over 35 who have had an abortion, 89% are already mothers raising at least one child.⁷

And pregnancy remains a significant risk. The fact is that children would not exist nor would the species survive but for women who become pregnant and, at significant risks to their own lives and health, give birth and bring forth life. Recent reports highlight the high rates of maternal mortality in the United States and the disproportionately higher rates for Black Mothers.⁸ Specifically, between 2014-2017, the maternal mortality rate for Black women was 41.7 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is significantly high when compared to the 11.6 deaths per 100,000 live births for Hispanic/Latina women, 13.4 deaths per 100,000 live births for White women, 13.8 deaths per Asian and Pacific Islander women, and 28.3 deaths per 100,000 live births for Native American women.⁹ Additionally, now approximately 31.9% of deliveries are through cesarean surgery, a major surgical procedure.¹⁰

There exist racial disparities in birth outcomes as well. Neonatal death, when a baby dies in the first 28 days of life, occurs in 3.78% of births each year in the United States.¹¹ However, non-Hispanic Black women are more likely to experience a neonatal loss than women of other races or ethnicities.¹²

From 2015 to 2019, there were 6.2 million pregnancies in the United States on average each year, representing approximately 7.5% of women aged 15-49.¹³ Of these approximately 6 million pregnancies, four million of those pregnancies will continue to term, and one million will have the dishearteningly common experience of pregnancy loss.¹⁴

From 2015 to 2019, each year 3.3 million pregnancies were intended and 2.9 million were unintended. Over that same time period, each year on average there were 46% of pregnancies were intended and 54% were unintended.¹⁵ During this time period, 16% of all pregnancies ended in an

abortion and 34% of all unintended pregnancies ended in an abortion.¹⁶ The majority of abortion patients had already given birth.¹⁷

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, November). National Center for Health Services. *Key Statistics from the National Survey of Family Growth - B Listing*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key_statistics/b_2015-2017.htm#birthsmothers

² Gabriela Weigel, et. al, *Understanding Pregnancy Loss in the Context of Abortion Restrictions and Fetal Harm Laws*, KFF Women's Health Policy (Dec. 4, 2019).

³ Guttmacher Institute. *Induced abortion in the United States* (2019), <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/induced-abortion-united-states>

⁴ Dugas, Carla and Slane, Valori H. (Jan. 29, 2021). *Miscarriage*. StatPearls Publishing LLC, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK532992/>.

⁵ Hoyert, D. L., Ph.D., & Gregory, E. C., M.P.H, (Oct. 30, 2016). Division of Vital Statistics. *Cause of Fetal Death: Data From the Fetal Death Report, 2014* (Publication No. 7), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr65/nvsr65_07.pdf

⁶ Jerman, J., Jones, R. K., & Onda, T. (2016). *Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients in 2014 and Changes Since 2008*. Guttmacher Institute. Retrieved from https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/characteristics-us-abortion-patients-2014.pdf

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Roeder, A. (2019). Harvard Public Health. *America is failing its black mothers*. Retrieved from https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/america-is-failing-its-black-mothers/

⁹ Division of Reproductive Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health. (Nov. 25, 2020). *Reproductive Health: Maternal Mortality. Pregnancy mortality surveillance system*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/pregnancy-mortality-surveillancesystem.htm#:~:text=Considerable%20racial%20ethnic%20disparities%20in%20pregnancy%20related%20mortality%20exist.&text=During%202014%E2%80%932017%2C%20the%20pregnancy,Indian%20or%20Alaska%20Native%20women.>

¹⁰ National Vital Statistics Report: *Births: Final Data for 2015*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017) Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_01.pdf

¹¹ Martin, J.A., et al. (Jan. 5, 2017). *Births: Final Data for 2015* (Publication No. 1, 66). Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_01.pdf

¹² Ely, D.A. & Driscoll, A.K. (July 16, 2020). *Infant Mortality in the United States, 2018: Data From the Period Linked Birth/Infant Death File, Publication No. 7, 69*, Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr69/NVSR-69-7-508.pdf>

¹³ Bearak, Jonathan, et al., *Unintended pregnancy and abortion by income, region, and the legal status of abortion: estimates from a comprehensive model for 1990–2019*, 8 *Lancet Global Health* E1152 (2020), [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109\(20\)303156/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109(20)303156/fulltext)

¹⁴ Lauren M. Rossen, et al., *Trends in Risk of Pregnancy Loss Among US Women, 1990-2011*, 32 *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* 19 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1111/ppe.12417>; Donna L. Hoyert & Elizabeth C.W. Gregory, *Cause of Fetal Death: Data from the Fetal Death Report, 2014*, 65 *Nat'l Vital Stat. Rep.* 1 (Oct. 2016)

¹⁵ Bearak supra note 13.

¹⁶ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (Nov. 2019). National Center for Health Services. *Key Statistics from the National Survey of Family Growth - I Listing*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key_statistics/i_2015-2017.htm#intended

¹⁷ Bearak supra note 13; Jerman supra note 6