

Black Women Are More Likely to Have Unnecessary C-Sections

Compared with white women, Black women are 25% more likely to undergo unscheduled C-sections.

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A [National Bureau of Economic Research \(NBER\) report](#) found that Black women who [gave birth](#) in New Jersey hospitals were about 25% more likely than white women to undergo unscheduled C-sections, [Healthline reports](#).

The report analyzed data from nearly one million births across 68 New Jersey hospitals.

Experts believe that more research is needed to identify what's causing these disparities; however, some suggest implicit racial bias in hospital delivery rooms is a contributing factor.

“The CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] has [released data](#) that clearly highlights national differences in C-section rates across each state, with New Jersey ranking on the high end. But this problem is not unique to New Jersey—disparities in maternal mortality, particularly along racial and socioeconomic lines, are also well documented,” said Mark Simon, MD, chief medical officer at Ob Hospitalist Group (OBHG), who was not involved in the research.

C-section deliveries, most of which are scheduled in advance, have increased in the United States in recent years. In fact, about one in three births in the country occur via planned and unplanned C-sections. Healthline notes that this rate is far above the World Health Organization's 10% to 15% target rate. Experts question whether these are medically necessary, particularly for Black women, who account for a growing number of unscheduled C-sections.

Although lifesaving in emergency situations, C-sections may be associated with C-dangers such as increased risk of bleeding, infection, blood clots and injury to other organs. What's more, C-sections can raise risks for future pregnancies, especially for Black women who already tend to have worse health outcomes compared with white women.

Indeed, Black women are more than three times more likely than white women to die of a pregnancy-related cause. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), factors that may contribute to this disparity include quality of health care, structural racism and implicit bias as well as chronic conditions such as hypertension or diabetes.

“If Black women undergo more cesarean deliveries, their exposure to associated risk increases,” Simon said. “These risks are compounded by the fact that Black women already experience higher rates of [pregnancy complications](#) and are more likely to have underlying chronic health conditions.”

Earlier this year, [doctors testified before Congress](#) to address the high rates of maternal mortality throughout the United States, particularly among Black women.

Although the U.S. maternal mortality rate has improved after a spike during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still the [highest among high-income nations](#). What’s more, in 2022, there were 22.3 deaths per 100,000 births overall compared with 32.9 deaths in 2021, [according to NPR](#). Black women experienced 49.5 deaths per 100,000 births in 2022 compared with 19 deaths per 100,000 for white women.

To read more, click [#Pregnancy](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[Philadelphia Group Empowers New Black Moms to Breastfeed](#),” “[Maternity Care in Rural Areas Is in Crisis. Can More Doulas Help?](#)” and “[Biden-Harris Administration Awards Over \\$558 Million to Improve Maternal and Child Health](#).”