



May 25, 2023

How Income and Socioeconomics Affect Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

A note to Bulletin readers:

Today marks the somber anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. As we honor his life—which was senselessly and violently cut short—we also remember the national reckoning that followed, which served as a catalyst for the *Road Map* and our work to ensure Mount Sinai is an anti-racist health care and learning institution.

May 25 now serves as a yearly reminder of our nation’s continuous need to pursue racial equity and justice. Today, while we acknowledge the progress we have made toward this goal, we know there’s a long road ahead. Thank you for your commitment to this journey and for ensuring Mount Sinai remains a fair, just, anti-racist, and equitable community for its staff, patients, and students.

Join us today from 5:30 – 6:30 pm for a *Let’s Connect* session, “Reflections of Healing and Hope,” to commemorate the third anniversary of George Floyd’s death. This virtual session will provide you the opportunity to share your thoughts, reflect on the past three years, and heal in a safe and welcoming space. All employees, faculty, trainees, and students are welcome to join. Register [here](#).

Happy Thursday, Mount Sinai Community –

For the third and final installment of our Black Maternal Health Bulletin series, we're looking at some of the risks of childbirth that vary by both race and income, and how Black families, regardless of their socioeconomic status, are disproportionately affected.

A recent study by the [National Bureau of Economic Research](#) of two million births in California, including nearly all children born to first-time mothers from 2007 to 2016, found that mothers and babies from wealthier backgrounds are largely protected from health complications—[except if they are Black](#). The study—the first of its size to combine income tax data with birth, death, and hospitalization records and demographic data—looked at health measures, including whether babies were born early or underweight; whether mothers had birth-related health problems like eclampsia or sepsis; and whether the babies and mothers died.

We know, and have explored, the broader forces at play that lead to these disparate outcomes and that the effects of race on childbirth [start long before patients arrive at the hospital](#), but to better understand these findings, we spoke with two Mount Sinai experts.



Joanne Stone, MD, MS, Chair of the Raquel and Jaime Gilinski Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Science at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai told us that: “This study tells us that structural racism faced in early life—even in the first 20 years—impacts future maternal and infant health. Education and attaining a high socioeconomic status does not seem to substantially change the long-term effects it has on long-term maternal and infant health.”



Her colleague, **Angela Bianco, MD, Director of Maternal-Fetal Medicine of the Raquel and Jaime Gilinski Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Science**, added that: “Infant and maternal health in Black families at the top of the income distribution is markedly worse than that of white families at the bottom of the income distribution, highlighting how Black birthing persons and their newborns have worse outcomes despite wealth. There is a call to arms in the

United States to determine the links between structural racism and social determinants of health, specifically approaches for measuring racial discrimination, which is the behavioral manifestation of structural racism, by measuring differences in access or quality of care by race, and better understanding the patient experience.”

To identify these connections and to begin reducing racial disparities impacting maternal health, teams at Mount Sinai are hard at work addressing the epidemic of Black maternal mortality. They are doing this by [building a more diverse medical workforce](#) and taking a 360-degree approach to building trust among the populations they serve, [reducing the stress of experiencing racism](#) that can affect health complications related to childbirth.

These interventions are critical to understanding and addressing the Black maternal mortality and morbidity crisis, and we're grateful to all Mount Sinai staff members who are committed to this work.

To suggest a topic, highlight a coworker, or provide feedback on the Bulletins, send us an email at RoadMap@mountsinai.org.

All the best,

Shawn and Angela

Join Us for an Upcoming Event

Chats for Change: In the News — Join Jay Johnson, CHES and [RBixCAP Fellow](#) Marcia Lange, MD/PhD Candidate on **Tuesday, May 30 from noon – 1 pm** to critically deconstruct a current newsworthy topic related to racism and bias using the *What? So What? Now What?* critical reflection model to explore what happened, what was learned from the event or topic, and how we can apply this learning to our day-to-day. Register on [Zoom](#).

A Guide to Nutrition and Your Well-being Panel — Join the Heritage of Latinx Alliance (HOLA) Employee Resource Group for a health and wellness panel. Panelists will engage in an informative conversation on the significance of nutrition and the effects it has on one's overall well-being. The panel will take place on **Monday, June 5 from noon – 1 pm**. Register [here](#).

[Road Map for Action](#)

[Past Bulletins](#)