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Comparing Maine Maternal Health Characteristics to the US Average

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Master of Public Health

Capstone Project 2022

Comparing Maine Maternal Health Characteristics to the US Average

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Summary:

Maternal health characteristics are commonly discussed topics in communities. Although some may not know exactly how in-depth data is collected on women that give birth, these characteristics are still discussed in education, healthcare, socially, and in the media. With each state collecting their own data on these characteristics, a large portion are depicted collectively, as a 'national average'. One of the most common characteristics is mortality of both the mother and the infant. This Capstone project will dive deeper into maternal characteristics and highlighting specific data to broaden the scope of commonly discussed maternal health characteristics. It will also dive deeper into Maine specific maternal characteristics and compare them to the US average. The main question being discussed in this Capstone project is how Maine compares to the rest of the US on specific maternal characteristics. The characteristics chosen to move forward with are: maternal age, maternal education, birthing place, attending staff education, race, and mothers birth continent.

Background:

Choosing Maine as a comparable state to the US average is just a steppingstone for people to continue this project in their own home states. Describing and comparing Maine's specific characteristics to the US average provide more information on Maine's maternal health needs. These infographics can be used to inform future research topics, new healthcare policies, expanding healthcare coverage to a more diverse and needed population, and to better support the population of Maine.

Maternal health is an extremely important topic to continue to discuss within a community. There are many factors, such as socioeconomic status, culture, and age, that influence maternal health and the outcome of the data characteristics in this population (Naz, 2019). These factors all are publicly discussed by *Maternal, Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Panel* (MFIMR) annually and the board specifically states that, "Maine needs to identify opportunities to increase awareness of the work of the MFIMR Panel to allow providers to introduce the process to bereaved families and **improve information** available for families" (Maine CDC, 2013).

Literature review on this topic is limited for Maine. Maine has no review for attending delivery staff education, maternal education, maternal birth continent, or maternal race. The only information found was on the CDC Wonder website, which can be daunting to use for people.

Maternal health should not just be discussed between healthcare professionals and women who are pregnant, they should be openly communicated to better protect and serve their future community.

Methods:

The CDC Wonder Website (2016-2020) was used to compare select characteristics of women giving birth in Maine compared to the US overall. These characteristics include maternal age, maternal education, attending staff education, maternal race, birthing place, and mothers birth

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continent. After, the characteristics were compared from Maine to the US average for 2020. Later, compared data on maternal age, attending delivery staff education, maternal education, and birthing place from 2016-2020 for both Maine and the US average. Comparing multiple years will help depict a trend over time.

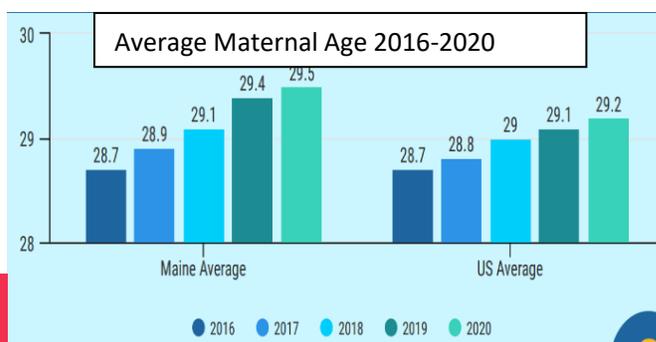
Once a sufficient amount of data was collected, infographics were created on the highlighted characteristics mentioned previously for maternal health. These infographics included descriptions of factors, how to get more information, and data figures to better visualize trends. These figures included bar charts showing trends over time (for categorical characteristics), pie charts for influential variables, and progress bars or improving understanding of the different characteristics.

Results:

The results of this Capstone project of comparing Maine maternal health characteristics to the US average showed both similarities and differences between the two study populations.

For similarities:

- Consistently increasing maternal age
- More common to have an MD as an attending staff member during birth
- 97-98% of all births are within a hospital



Average Maternal Age 2020

32.5 years old

30 years old

USA Average Maternal Age: 29.2 Years Old

27.5 years old



For differences:

- Maine has a higher maternal age
- Maine has less maternal racial diversity
- In 2020 Maine mothers were more collegiately educated than the US

Please see attached infographics for further results of my findings.

Conclusions:

In conclusion, Maine can be seen as both different and similar to the US average on maternal characteristics. It is important to note that each state has its own unique populations and results may vary. It is also important to note that each state, because of its uniqueness, requires an in depth look at maternal characteristics in order for policies to be conducted. With policies on maternal health, it is not beneficial to umbrella each state with a national average poll but instead, conduct research on how the maternal population will benefit and thrive within its own state's community. A policy for one state may not be the best policy for the other. Keeping in mind socioeconomic status, diversity, age, and rurality of the maternal population, policies and procedures should keep into account what the state has for its own population.

With that all being said, in the current atmosphere of our politics, maternal health is becoming more compromised. With the possibility of overturning *Roe vs Wade*, the importance of keeping, and recording, statistical data on maternal characteristics is more important than ever.

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