

A Stride Toward Health Equity Through Paid Family Leave

The Social Problem: Health & Racial Disparities

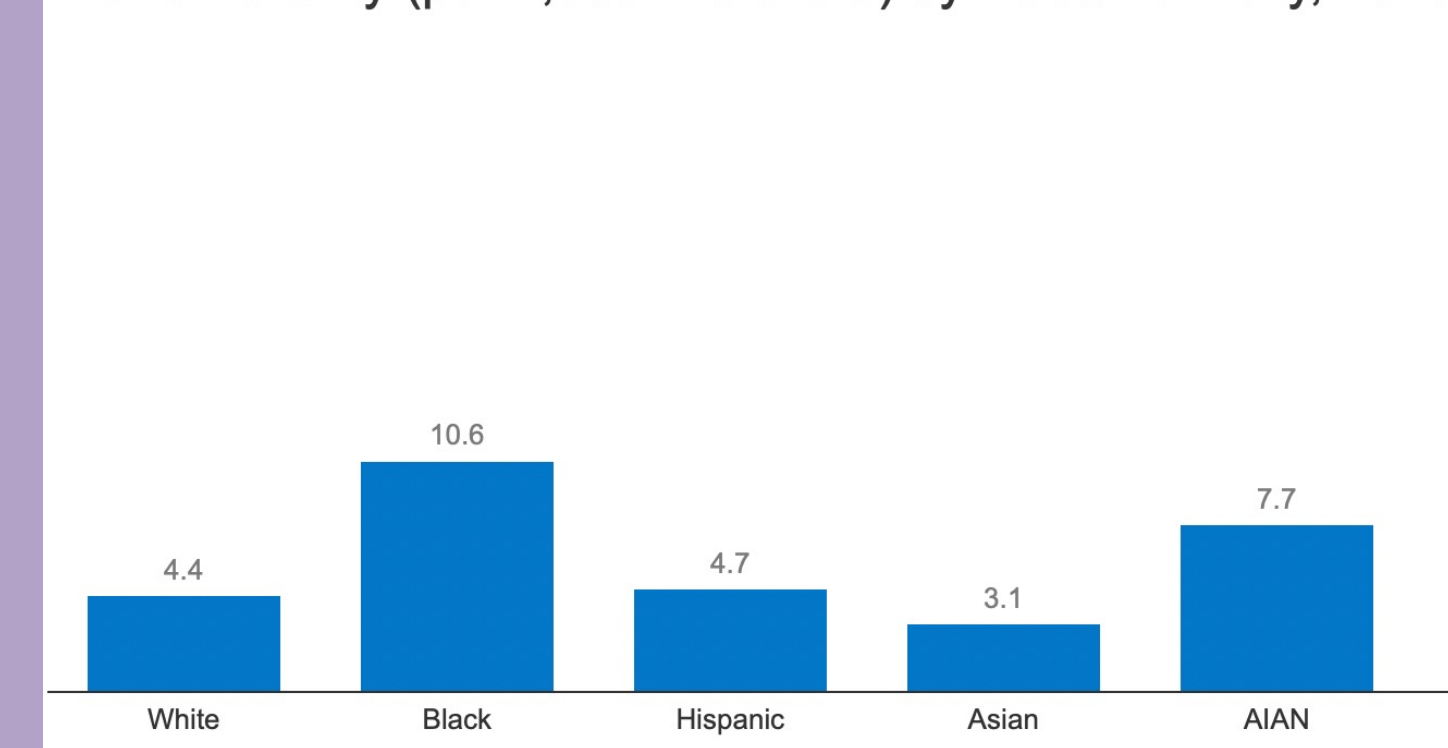
The CDC Reports:

"Race and ethnicity are markers for other underlying conditions that affect health, including socioeconomic status, access to health care, and exposure to the virus through occupation"

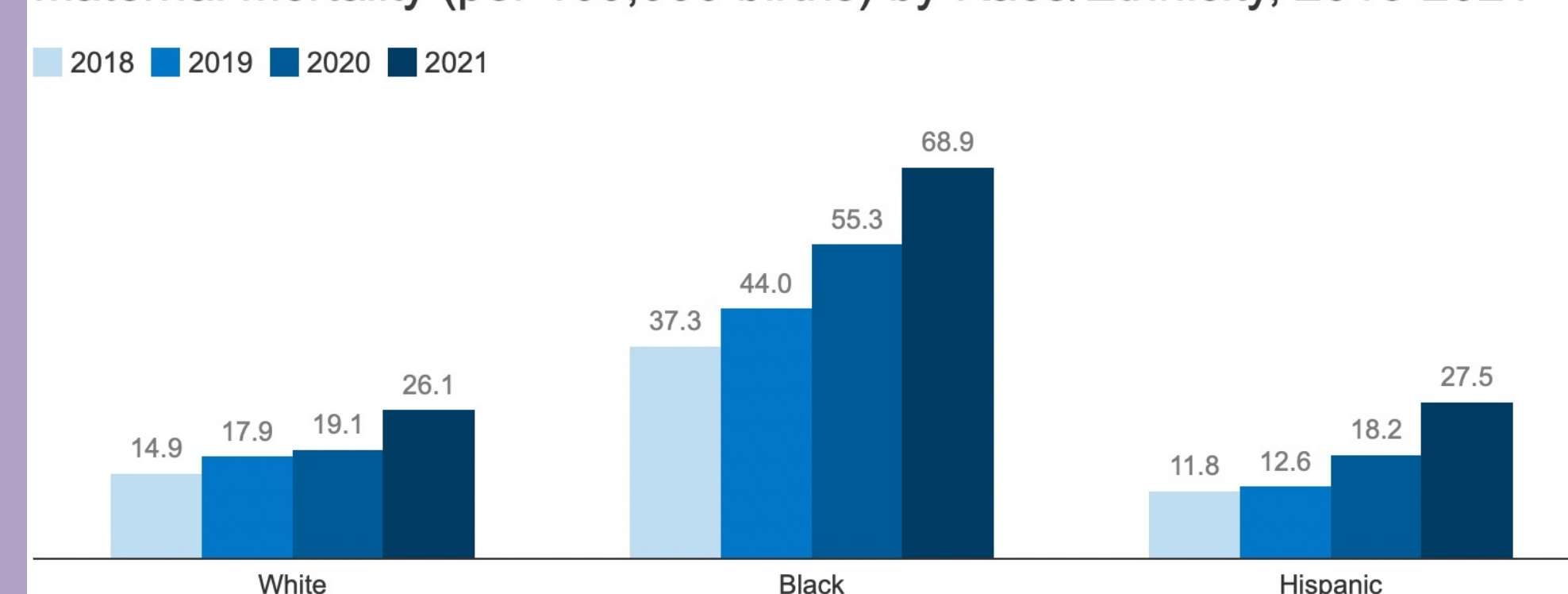
The Statistics

- Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan natives & Pacific Islanders experience disproportional adverse health affects compared to those of white Americans
 - Racial minorities are more likely to have less access to affordable health services as well as overall lower quality health care
 - As compared to white people...
 - AIAN people are 2.0x
 - Black people are 1.6x
 - Hispanic people are 1.7x
- more likely to die from COVID-19

Infant Mortality (per 1,000 live births) by Race/Ethnicity, 2020



Maternal Mortality (per 100,000 births) by Race/Ethnicity, 2018-2021



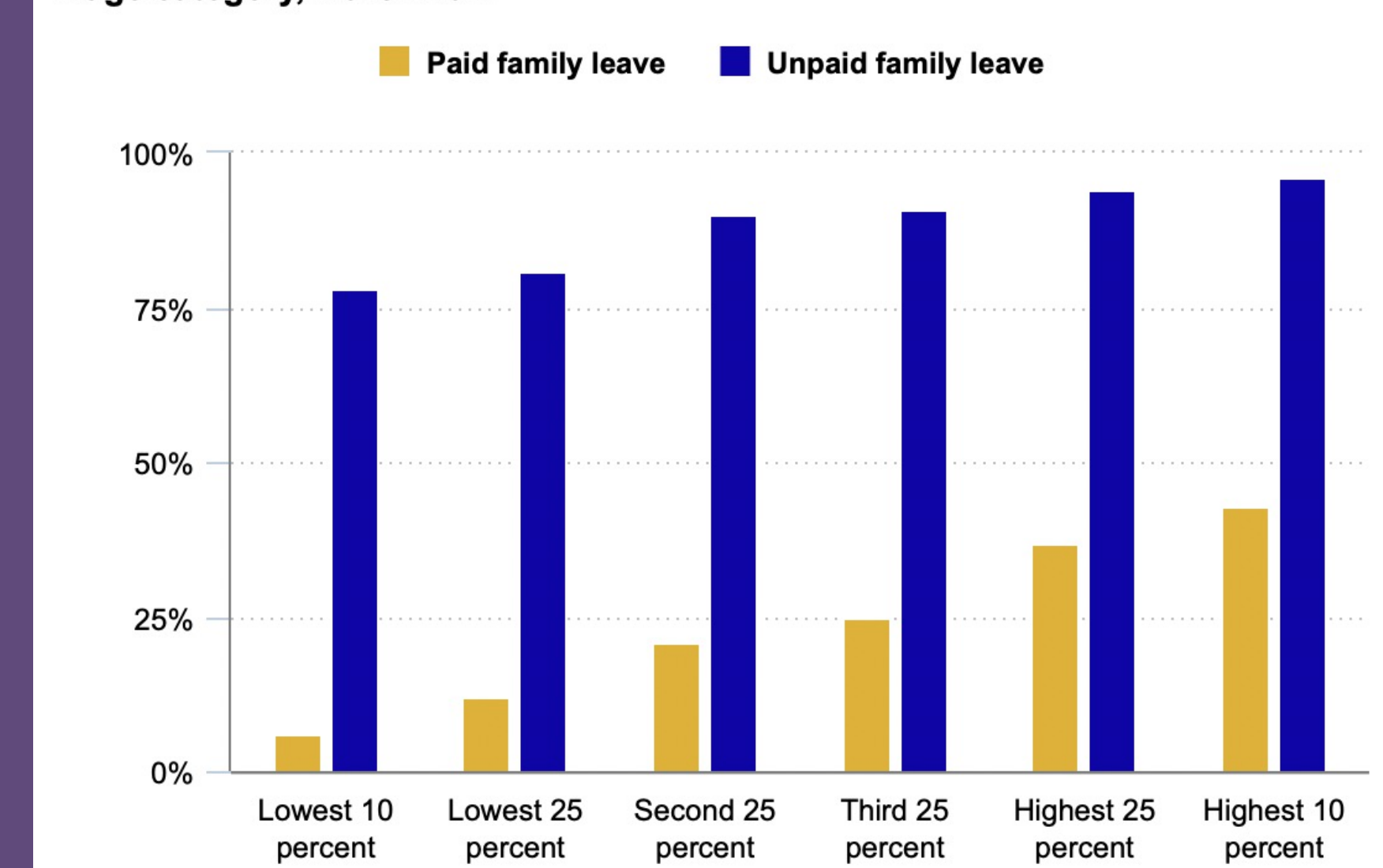
SOURCE: United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), Maternal Health: Outcomes Worsened and Disparities Persisted During the Pandemic, GAO-23-105877 (Washington, D.C.: Oct 2022). PWS.

How to Improve NJFLI & The Positives of Paid Family Leave Policies

Improving NJFLI & Other Paid Family Leave Policies

- Expanding eligibility requirements
- Adding job protection
- Informing/educating employers & employees about the policies
- Earlier/on-time payments
- Improving help with application process/making it more accessible

Percent of private industry workers with access to family leave benefits by wage category, March 2021



SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily, A look at paid family leave by wage category in 2021

Only 6% of industry workers in the lowest 10 percent wage category have access to paid family leave VS.

43% of industry workers in the highest 10 percent wage category have access to paid family leave

Positives of Paid Family Leave Policies

"Mothers who take shorter paid leaves had lower scores on the CES-D depression scale than mothers who took shorter leaves that were unpaid" (Mandal, 2018)

"Longer leaves are associated with fewer depressive symptoms among new mothers and are associated with lower odds of infants being re-hospitalized after birth"(Chatterji & Markowitz, 2004,2012, You et al., 2018)

"Among economically disadvantaged families, mothers report more positive relationships over time with fathers who take leave" (R.J. Petts & Knoester, 2019; Pilkauskas & Schneider, 2020)

In a study of employers, Appelbaum & Lerner (2014) found the employers they interviewed didn't experience changes in employee productivity or turn over after the passage of Family Leave Insurance. Employers reported FLI improved morale and decreased stress among employees

Why we Need This Policy

Pay for family or medical leave is necessary for basic human needs like food, shelter, clothing and it is needed for other necessities like heat/electricity, child care, vaccinations, doctors appointments, medication and so much more



SOURCE: Dickens, K. (Director). (2017). ZERO WEEKS (Documentary). Yellowing Productions

40% of Americans don't even qualify for FMLA and 48% who do qualify say they are unable to take the leave anyway because UNPAID = UNAFFORDABLE

- Mothers are forced to go to work weeks or some even days after giving birth to escape poverty
- Families are split apart through insufficient time to bond with their newborns
- Sons and daughters are unable to care for their terminally ill or aging parents

Through the expansion and improvement of paid family leave policies such as NJFLI, we can inspire other states to create & these policies and one day soon implement these policies at the federal level

Sources:

- https://smfr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Implementation_PaidFamilyLeave_Oct2021.pdf
- <https://www.nwfl.org/en/insights/our-research/2021/05/improving-access-to-paid-family-leave-to-achieve-health-equity.html>
- <https://nurture.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20210120-Nurture-NJ-Strategic-Plan.pdf>
- <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/state-paid-family-leave-law.pdf>
- <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/economic-justice/paid-leave/called-to-care-a-rationally-just-recovery-demands-paid-family-and-medical-leave.pdf>
- <https://mi.gov/labor/myleavebenefits/worker/fli/>
- <https://www.dhs.gov/agencies/whofamily>
- <https://www.njmetocare.com/paid-family-leave>

What is Paid Family Leave Policy?

Paid Family Leave Policies allow for workers to take paid time off of work to bond with a newborn or care for a significantly ill family member

Countries with paid maternity leave:

- Czech Republic - 28 weeks
- Hungary - 24 weeks
- Canada - 17 weeks

And approximately 120 other nations



The United States is ONLY developed nation without paid family leave

Out of 39 other industrialized countries the US is...

- 34th in life expectancy
- 28th in gender equality
- 39th (dead last) in maternal health, child health & family friendly policies

What does the US have?

Family and Medical Leave ACT (FMLA) — provides up to 12 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave for the birth/care of newborn, care for immediate family member w/ serious health condition or for personal serious health condition

But FMLA only applies to workers who have worked for their employer for at least 12 months, 1,250 hours in those months and work at a company that employees at 50+ employees

However, eleven US states have passed paid family and medical leave laws, including New Jersey

The Policy: New Jersey Family Leave Insurance (NJFLI)

NJFLI is a partial wage replacement program that allows for eligible workers to take time off of work to bond with a newborn or newly adopted child or provide care for a family member with a serious health condition

- NJFLI is funded by being completely financed through worker payroll deductions (employers do not contribute to program)
- NJFLI was signed into law by Governor Corzine in 2009
- NJFLI was later expanded by Governor Murphy in July of 2020

Strengths of NJFLI

- Provides paid leave (unlike FMLA)
- You may be eligible if you work in NJ, regardless of where you live
- In July 2020 NJFLI was expanded to include more weeks of leave, wage replacement & definition of family

NJFLI Expansion

Weeks of leave	6 weeks	12 weeks
Wage replacement	66% up to max benefit of \$667 per week	85% up to max benefit of \$903 per week
Definition of family	Child < 18, parent, spouse, civil union partner	Children of any age (including foster), parents-in-law, siblings, grandparents, any other individuals w whom u have equivalent of family membership

Weaknesses of NJFLI

- Eligibility requirements (no contractors or federal gov employees)
- Does not provide job-protected leave; to many this is not a risk they can take (if they are even eligible)
- General knowledge of & around NJFLI