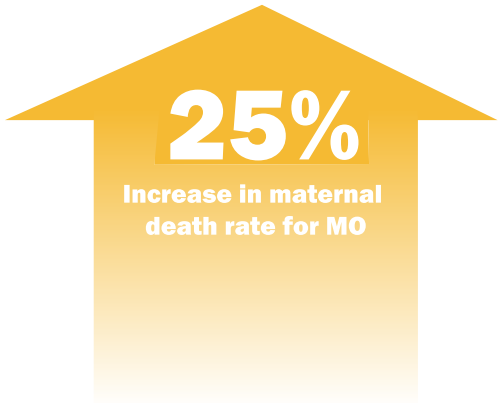


Missouri maternal deaths rise

By Clayton Vickers

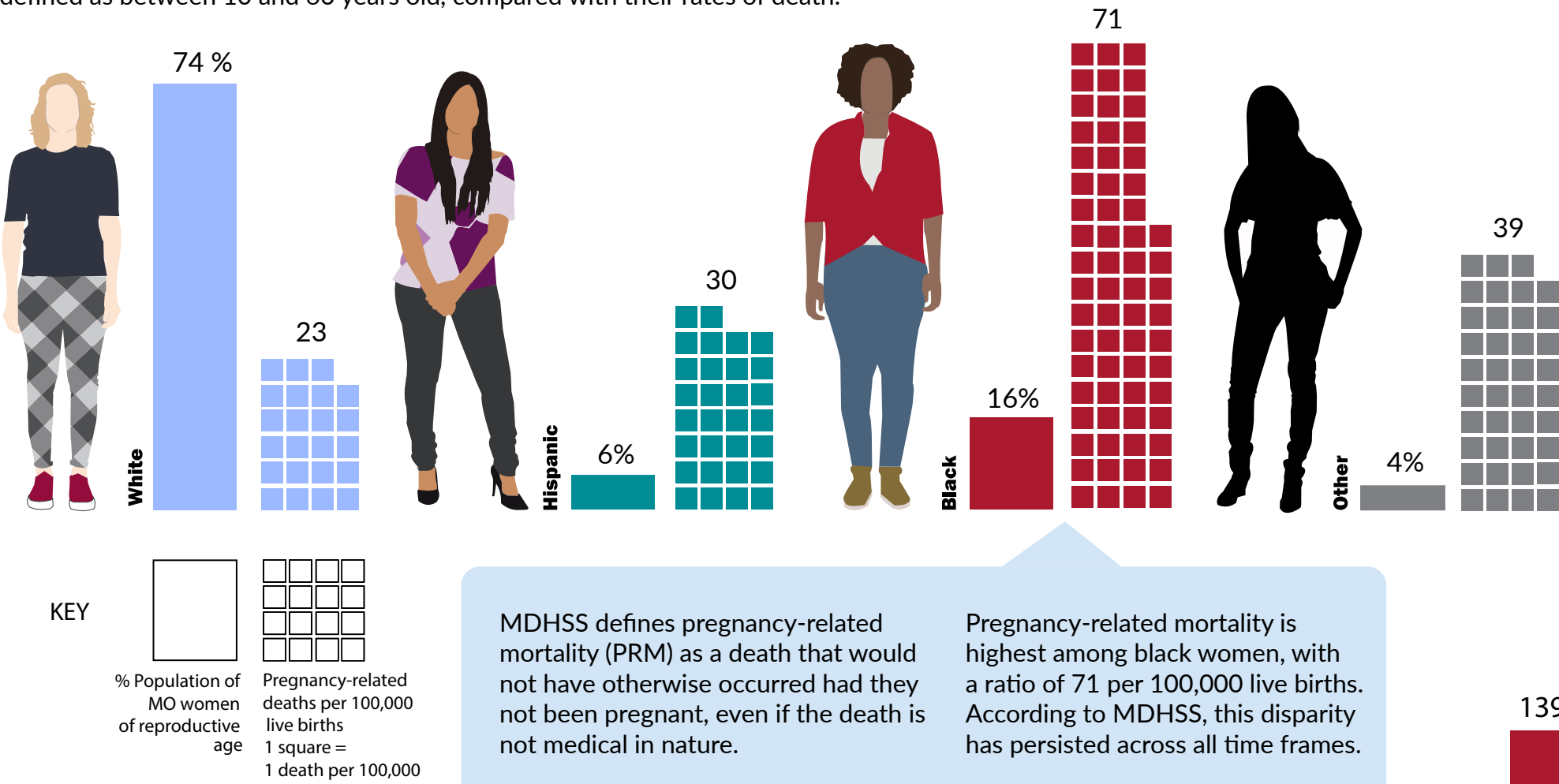
According to a multi-year report (2018-2020) from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, maternal mortality is worsening in Missouri. Compared to the department's previous multi-year report (2017-2019), maternal deaths climbed by over 25%. The proportion of deaths considered preventable rose from 75% to 84%.

Punctuating the problem is a notable disparity in health outcomes and deaths between white and minority women specifically. Though the sample size can be considered small — 210 women died in the three-year period — the findings speak to a problem that health practitioners are trying to figure out, said Daniel Quay, a major contributor to the report's creation.



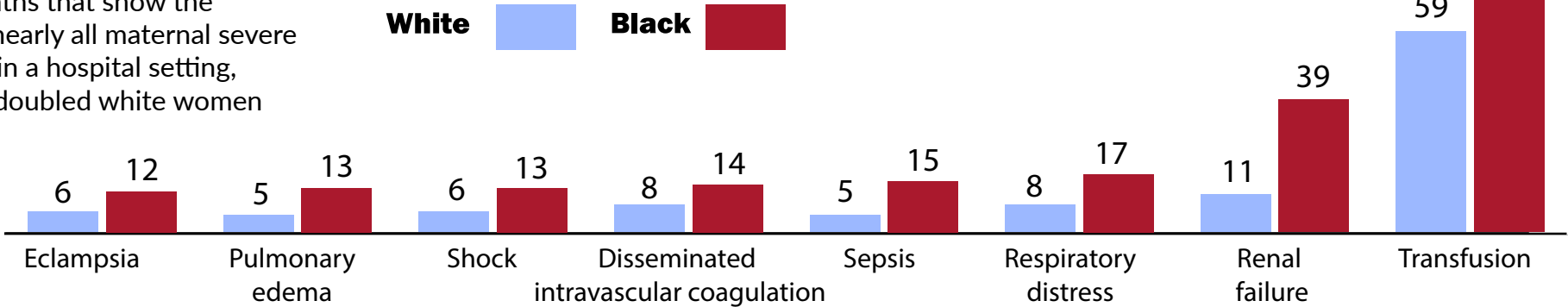
Minority women are affected the most

Consider this demographic breakdown of women of reproductive age in Missouri, defined as between 10 and 60 years old, compared with their rates of death.



Frequency of severe health events

It isn't just deaths that show the disparity. For nearly all maternal severe health events in a hospital setting, black women doubled white women in frequency.



Greatest risk factors for maternal mortality

Within the 220 deaths recorded and studied by MDHSS, pregnant women succumbed to three causes of death the most:

#1 Mental health

All deaths attributable to mental health, including substance use disorder cases, were determined to be preventable.

Even without including substance use disorder cases, mental health conditions contributed to 1 in 3 pregnancy-related deaths.

Substance use disorder (SUD), however, played a serious role.

77% of women killed by SUD were in their 20s. And 47% of pregnancy-related deaths involved a history of substance abuse.

#2 Cardiovascular disease

Cardiovascular disease can be induced or worsened by pregnancy. Complicating factors can further strain the body.

Obesity was a very important factor, and members of MDHSS cited body mass index (BMI) as an important metric for cardiovascular disease. 47% of pregnancy-related deaths were of obese women; their mortality ratio was more than 1.5× higher.

Likewise, tobacco use was dangerous for not only the child, but for the adult — 44% of victims used tobacco.

#3 Fatal injury

Maternal mortality from fatal injury often involved a firearm. A firearm was utilized in 75% of murders, a large category for fatal injury.

In 75% of the cases involving a firearm, the perpetrator was a current or former partner. And, in 50% of these cases, records indicated a history of domestic violence.

Because of this, the report recommends that health care providers screen for domestic (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) and perform risk assessment for the presence of firearms in the home.

Pregnancy-related social & emotional stressors

Percentages reflect how many women reported each stressor and do not necessarily add up to 100%.

