

The logo of Assumption University, Worcester, MA, established in 1904. It features a circular seal with the university's name and founding year. The central shield contains a crown, a cross with the letters 'ATR' on it, and a fleur-de-lis.

Assumption University, Worcester, MA

Abstract

Purpose

- ## Results

Healthcare Access:

Sweden

- Italy
 - The National Health Service provides universal coverage.
- The central government sets fundamental principles and goals for the healthcare system and services included in the benefits package while regional governments are responsible for the organization and administration of services.
 - Healthcare services and outcomes can reflect economic and social inequalities between Italy's northern and southern regions.
- The central government requires a national benefits package to be offered to residents of every region.
 - Benefits include pharmaceuticals, primary care, inpatient care, preventative medicine, and maternity care among others.

United States

- ### Quality of Reproductive Healthcare:

Sweden

- Access to contraception is regulated at the national level.
 - Regional governments are responsible for the organization and administration of these services.
- Family planning centers often lack resources and appropriate staffing numbers.
 - Few of these centers are connected to hospitals or specialized services and are not easily accessible outside of larger cities.
- Contraceptive counseling is accessible and affordable.

Italy

- Access to contraception is regulated at the national level.
 - Regional governments are responsible for the organization and administration of these services.
- Family planning centers often lack resources and appropriate staffing numbers.
 - Few of these centers are connected to hospitals or specialized services and are not easily accessible outside of larger cities.
- Contraceptive counseling is accessible and affordable.

United States

- ### Gender Equality:

Sweden

- Italy

- United States

- The United States ranks 43rd in the Global Gender Gap Index in closing its gender gap by 74.7% (World Economic Forum, 2024).
 - The score is based on four indexes: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.
- The Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) allows eligible employees up to 12 weeks of job-protected, unpaid leave for family and medical reasons, including maternity leave.
 - Recovery generally takes 6-8 weeks but symptoms and changes that occur during the postpartum period can last over 8 weeks (Cleveland Clinic).
- Longer maternity leave may decrease rates of poor maternal mental and physical health reports (Whitney et al., 2024).
 - Maternity leave of 12 weeks or more offers the greatest health benefits for mothers and their infants (Whitney et al., 2024).
 - Nearly two-thirds of maternal deaths in the US occur during the postpartum period (Commonwealth Fund, 2024).
 - Approximately 20-40% of women develop postpartum mood disorders (PPMD) with pronounced, long-lasting symptoms within the first year after childbirth (Mass General Brigham).

This cross-country comparison of industrialized nations reveals three important global factors contributing to maternal mortality and reflects the individual MMRs of the countries reviewed.

- Compared to Sweden and Italy, the US has poorer healthcare access due in part to a mixed health system.
 - Mixed health systems may result in higher costs for patients making it harder for them to afford high-quality health services.
- The US possesses more conservative and restricted practices on family planning and reproductive healthcare.
 - Sweden makes family planning and reproductive healthcare resources more accessible through lower costs and greater public presence.
 - Italy favors reproductive education and counseling over government reimbursement for contraception.
- The EU states that “Each individual has the right to have full control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters affecting their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health”
 - The US does not have an official statement regarding reproductive rights nationwide.
- Almost every member of the EU offers at least 14 weeks of job-protected, paid maternity leave, during which employees receive at least two-thirds of their typical earnings (Gault et al., 2014).
 - The US is the only high-income country and one of eight countries in the world that does not require paid maternity leave (Gault et al., 2014).

- Improving healthcare accessibility in the US entails expanding access to subsidies for those beyond the current eligibility requirements.
 - Includes those who face additional social barriers.
- Expanding reproductive rights in the US grants women with greater reproductive autonomy as well as increased choice and control in their medical care.
- Increasing the length of maternity leave in the US allows greater time for postpartum recovery and decreases negative mental and physical health outcomes.

I would like to thank Dr. Cinzia Pica for her mentorship throughout this project and all faculty members in the Department of Health and Human Services at Assumption University for their continuous support.

[illegible][illegible]