

ABSTRACT

A society's maternal well being depends on a range of underlying determinants, including social, cultural, health system, and economic factors. These have a profound effect on maternal health and, ultimately, on maternal mortality. Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. While motherhood is often a positive and fulfilling experience, for too many women, it is associated with suffering, ill-health and even death. Thus maternal health is more than maternal deaths. Analyzing the performance of individual states in regards to maternal health and comparing their performances has become an important area of research for a number of reasons. In this paper, we try to identify what drives the large disparities in maternal BMI distribution among Indian states. This paper takes an empirical case-study approach, where we compare a set of Indian states displaying relatively poor maternal health outcomes – Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (collectively called BiMaRU states), with a benchmark state displaying relatively good outcomes: Tamil Nadu.