

# Mother's Education Level

## DEFINITION

*Mother's education level* is the percentage of total births to women with less than a high school diploma. Data are self-reported at the time of the infant's birth. Although a father's education level has a major impact on his child's development, this indicator uses maternal education levels because a significant number of birth records lack information on paternal education levels.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Parental educational attainment can impact many aspects of child well-being. Parental education levels influence children's health and health-related behaviors, the level of education children will ultimately achieve, and their access to material, human and social resources.<sup>1</sup> Increases in maternal education levels have also been associated with improvements in children's academic performance.<sup>2</sup>

Higher education levels typically lead to higher earnings.<sup>3</sup> Even if a child's parents work full-time, children are more likely to be low income if their parents do not have a college education.<sup>4</sup> Children of immigrants, Black children and Hispanic children are less likely to have parents with high education levels and more likely to be low income than their peers. However, Black and Hispanic children are more

likely to be low income than White and Asian children even when their parents have comparable levels of education.<sup>5,6</sup>

One of the best ways parents can raise their families' incomes is through higher education.<sup>7</sup> Women with a bachelor's degree in Rhode Island earn more than twice as much as those with less than a high school diploma.<sup>8</sup> Between 2003 and 2007, 15% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 37% were to mothers with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>9</sup> Educational attainment levels vary widely across cities and towns in Rhode Island.<sup>10</sup>

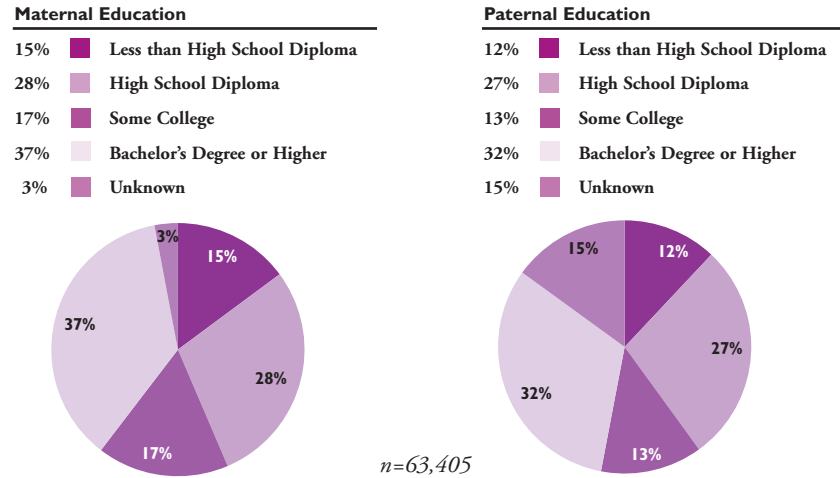
Of the 9,802 Rhode Island children born to mothers with less than a high school diploma between 2003 and 2007, 3,273 were to teen mothers (under age 20).<sup>11</sup> Nationally, teen mothers attain an average of three fewer years of education than older mothers.<sup>12</sup>

### % of Births to Mothers with Less than High School Diploma

City/Town	% of Children
Central Falls	36%
Newport	16%
Pawtucket	21%
Providence	29%
West Warwick	15%
Woonsocket	25%
Remainder of State	6%
Rhode Island	15%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2003-2007.

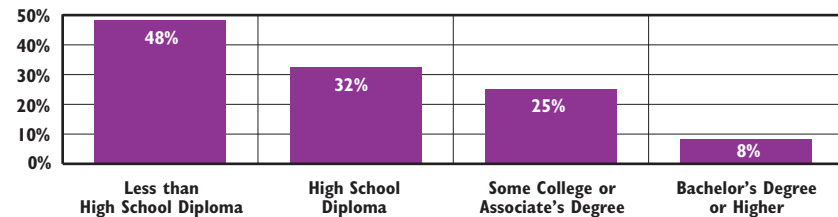
### Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2003-2007



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2003-2007. Data for 2007 are provisional. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2003 and 2007, 43% of infants were born to mothers with a high school diploma or less, and 39% were born to fathers with a high school diploma or less.<sup>13</sup>

### Poverty Rates for Families Headed by Single Females by Educational Attainment, Rhode Island, 2007



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007. Table S1702.

◆ The poverty rate among families headed by single females is directly correlated with householder educational levels. In Rhode Island in 2007, the poverty rates for families headed by single females ranged from 48% for women with less than a high school diploma to 8% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>14</sup>

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Table 5.

**Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2003-2007**

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL # OF BIRTHS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR ABOVE		SOME COLLEGE		HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA		LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barrington	725	583	80%	63	9%	60	8%	7	1%
Bristol	967	488	50%	193	20%	214	22%	48	5%
Burrillville	776	285	37%	196	25%	213	27%	59	8%
Central Falls	2,027	183	9%	248	12%	777	38%	739	36%
Charlestown	387	199	51%	77	20%	81	21%	27	7%
Coventry	1,775	821	46%	353	20%	479	27%	101	6%
Cranston	4,407	2,026	46%	761	17%	1,141	26%	381	9%
Cumberland	1,826	1,037	57%	344	19%	337	18%	72	4%
East Greenwich	522	392	75%	57	11%	43	8%	15	3%
East Providence	2,638	957	36%	536	20%	784	30%	282	11%
Exeter	281	139	49%	48	17%	71	25%	15	5%
Foster	228	115	50%	37	16%	56	25%	15	7%
Glocester	410	209	51%	81	20%	95	23%	17	4%
Hopkinton	467	193	41%	101	22%	129	28%	36	8%
Jamestown	206	158	77%	22	11%	19	9%	2	1%
Johnston	1,395	582	42%	279	20%	407	29%	103	7%
Lincoln	935	493	53%	180	19%	191	20%	42	4%
Little Compton	143	89	62%	24	17%	26	18%	3	2%
Middletown	1,005	485	48%	201	20%	263	26%	37	4%
Narragansett	547	317	58%	101	18%	89	16%	20	4%
New Shoreham	52	23	44%	19	37%	9	17%	0	0%
Newport	1,540	668	43%	224	15%	333	22%	242	16%
North Kingstown	1,319	774	59%	200	15%	254	19%	58	4%
North Providence	1,650	684	41%	346	21%	454	28%	104	6%
North Smithfield	470	253	54%	91	19%	85	18%	25	5%
Pawtucket	5,715	1,298	23%	997	17%	1,996	35%	1,190	21%
Portsmouth	855	499	58%	144	17%	165	19%	28	3%
Providence	14,869	3,220	22%	1,885	13%	4,745	32%	4,357	29%
Richmond	483	271	56%	79	16%	95	20%	31	6%
Scituate	446	245	55%	88	20%	90	20%	15	3%
Smithfield	746	450	60%	130	17%	116	16%	28	4%
South Kingstown	1,214	756	62%	168	14%	205	17%	52	4%
Tiverton	660	317	48%	160	24%	141	21%	34	5%
Warren	546	229	42%	115	21%	140	26%	53	10%
Warwick	4,273	1,970	46%	815	19%	1,065	25%	320	7%
West Greenwich	256	140	55%	50	20%	52	20%	11	4%
West Warwick	2,019	605	30%	360	18%	716	35%	295	15%
Westerly	1,322	515	39%	266	20%	404	31%	123	9%
Woonsocket	3,301	474	14%	566	17%	1,322	40%	815	25%
Unknown	2	1	NA	0	NA	0	NA	0	NA
Core Cities	29,471	6,448	22%	4,280	15%	9,889	34%	7,638	26%
Remainder of State	33,934	16,694	49%	6,325	19%	7,973	23%	2,164	6%
Rhode Island	63,405	23,142	36%	10,605	17%	17,862	28%	9,802	15%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2003-2007. Data for 2007 are provisional. Data are self-reported and reported by the mother's place of residence, not the place of the infant's birth.

Percentages may not sum to 100% for all cities, towns and the state because the number and percentage of births with unknown parental education levels are not included in this table. Between 2003 and 2007, maternal education levels were unknown for 1,993 births (3%).

Core Cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

## References

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- <sup>3,4,7</sup> National Center for Children in Poverty. (2007). *Parents' low education leads to low income, despite full-time employment*. Retrieved January 24, 2008 from [www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org)
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- U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007. Table B20004.
- <sup>9,10,11,13</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2003-2007. Data for 2007 are provisional.
- <sup>12</sup> *2004 KIDS COUNT data book: State profiles of child well-being*. (2004). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- <sup>14</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007. Table S1702.