

# 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 level because a significant number of birth records lack information on paternal education levels.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Parental educational attainment can have an impact on many aspects of child well-being, including children's health and health-related behaviors, the level of education children will ultimately achieve, and their access to material, human and social resources. Children of parents with low levels of education are more likely to die before their first birthday, more likely to have poor health and less likely to succeed in school. Increases in maternal education levels have also been associated with improvements in children's academic performance, health and future earnings.<sup>1,2</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> In the U.S., children of immigrants, Black children and

Hispanic children are less likely to have parents with high education levels and are 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 some college education.<sup>5,6</sup>

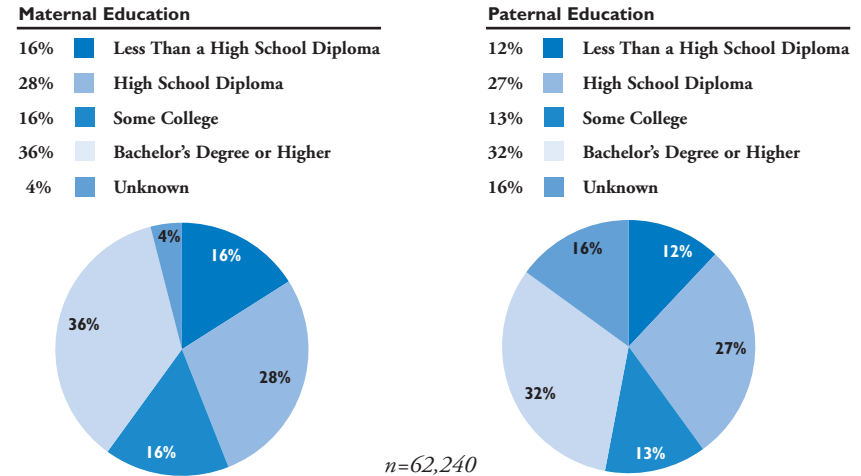
One of the best ways parents can raise family income is through higher education.<sup>7</sup> Women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earn more than twice as much as those with less than a high school diploma.<sup>8</sup> Between 2004 and 2008, 16% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 36% 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>

### Births to Mothers with Less Than a High School Diploma

City/Town	% of Children
Central Falls	36%
Newport	15%
Pawtucket	21%
Providence	30%
West Warwick	14%
Woonsocket	25%
All Core Cities	26%
Remainder of State	7%
Rhode Island	16%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2004-2008.

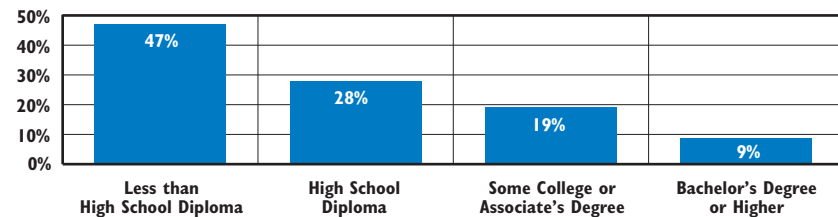
### Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2004-2008



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2004-2008. Data for 2008 are provisional.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2004 and 2008, 44% of all 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>11</sup>

### Poverty Rates for Families Headed by Single Females by Educational Attainment, Rhode Island, 2006-2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008. Table S1702.

◆ The poverty rate among families headed by single females is directly correlated with the householder's educational level. In Rhode Island between 2006 and 2008, the poverty rates for families headed by single females ranged from 47% for women with less than a high school diploma to 9% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>12</sup>

Table 5.

**Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2004-2008**

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	667	521	78%	63	9%	61	9%	7	1%
Bristol	921	458	50%	184	20%	203	22%	46	5%
Burrillville	754	282	37%	178	24%	219	29%	51	7%
Central Falls	2,021	170	8%	230	11%	782	39%	731	36%
Charlestown	370	199	54%	68	18%	75	20%	23	6%
Coventry	1,683	755	45%	353	21%	431	26%	114	7%
Cranston	4,325	1,936	45%	764	18%	1,125	26%	376	9%
Cumberland	1,784	1,017	57%	310	17%	342	19%	72	4%
East Greenwich	517	385	74%	52	10%	50	10%	13	3%
East Providence	2,606	960	37%	525	20%	744	29%	283	11%
Exeter	261	134	51%	44	17%	56	21%	17	7%
Foster	233	112	48%	37	16%	64	27%	14	6%
Glocester	398	205	52%	70	18%	93	23%	19	5%
Hopkinton	458	196	43%	88	19%	128	28%	35	8%
Jamestown	187	148	79%	18	10%	13	7%	2	1%
Johnston	1,390	567	41%	272	20%	420	30%	104	7%
Lincoln	909	466	51%	176	19%	187	21%	46	5%
Little Compton	141	89	63%	24	17%	25	18%	2	1%
Middletown	984	467	47%	194	20%	260	26%	40	4%
Narragansett	492	287	58%	89	18%	75	15%	21	4%
New Shoreham	49	22	45%	18	37%	8	16%	0	0%
Newport	1,516	672	44%	209	14%	329	22%	221	15%
North Kingstown	1,272	730	57%	192	15%	247	19%	67	5%
North Providence	1,615	680	42%	332	21%	438	27%	100	6%
North Smithfield	439	252	57%	77	18%	74	17%	27	6%
Pawtucket	5,668	1,271	22%	987	17%	1,960	35%	1,189	21%
Portsmouth	810	487	60%	133	16%	146	18%	23	3%
Providence	14,774	3,123	21%	1,836	12%	4,661	32%	4,432	30%
Richmond	460	249	54%	72	16%	95	21%	35	8%
Scituate	417	226	54%	86	21%	83	20%	13	3%
Smithfield	730	435	60%	128	18%	119	16%	27	4%
South Kingstown	1,161	726	63%	158	14%	191	16%	55	5%
Tiverton	625	308	49%	145	23%	126	20%	35	6%
Warren	527	214	41%	103	20%	144	27%	55	10%
Warwick	4,193	1,901	45%	768	18%	1,053	25%	348	8%
West Greenwich	245	123	50%	58	24%	50	20%	10	4%
West Warwick	1,989	608	31%	340	17%	701	35%	287	14%
Westerly	1,340	517	39%	267	20%	418	31%	122	9%
Woonsocket	3,304	476	14%	559	17%	1,312	40%	836	25%
Unknown	5	1	NA	2	NA	1	NA	0	NA
Core Cities	29,272	6,320	22%	4,161	14%	9,745	33%	7,696	26%
Remainder of State	32,963	16,054	49%	6,046	18%	7,763	24%	2,202	7%
Rhode Island	62,240	22,375	36%	10,209	16%	17,509	28%	9,898	16%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2004-2008. Data for 2008 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 maternal education levels are not included in this table. Between 2004 and 2008, maternal education levels were unknown for 2,249 births (4%).

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

### References

- <sup>13</sup> Robert Wood Johnston Foundation, Education Matters for Health. *Issue brief 6: Education and health*. (2009). Retrieved January 19, 2010 from www.commissionhealth.org
- <sup>2</sup> Nichols, A. & Favreault, M. (2009). *A detailed picture of intergenerational transmission of human capital*. Washington, DC: Pew Charitable Trusts.
- <sup>47</sup> National Center for Children in Poverty. (2007). *Parents' low education leads to low income, despite full-time employment*. Retrieved January 19, 2010 from www.nccp.org
- <sup>5</sup> National Center for Children in Poverty. (2006). *The racial gap in parental education*. Retrieved January 19, 2010 from www.nccp.org
- <sup>6</sup> Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2009). *America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2009*. Retrieved January 19, 2010 from www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/
- <sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008. Table B20004.
- <sup>9,10,11</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2004-2008. Data for 2008 are provisional.
- <sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008. Table S1702.