

# 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 an 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 less likely to succeed in school and more likely to live in poverty and have poor health.<sup>12</sup>

There is a strong correlation between maternal education attainment and infant mortality. Nationally, and in Rhode Island, infant mortality rates increase as mother's education levels decrease.<sup>3,4</sup> In Rhode Island, the mortality rate of infants born to mothers with less than a high school diploma was 7.3 per 1,000 live births, compared to 4.4 per 1,000 live births for infants born to mothers with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>5</sup>

Children of more highly educated parents have greater academic skills at school entry than other children and outperform their peers in later grades. Increasing maternal education can improve children's school readiness, academic and language skills.<sup>6</sup> Increases in maternal education levels also have been associated with improvements in health and future earnings.<sup>7,8</sup>

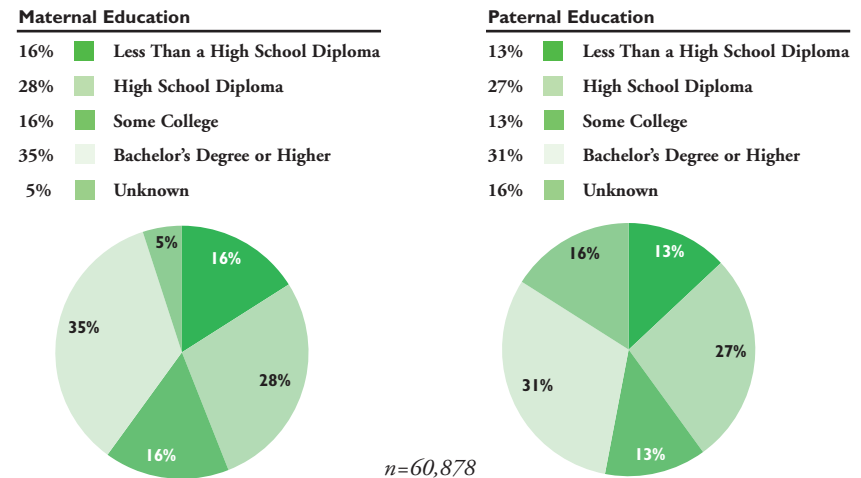
One of the best ways parents can raise their families' incomes is through higher education.<sup>9</sup> Women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earn more than twice as much as those with less than a high school diploma.<sup>10</sup> Between 2005 and 2009, 16% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 35% were to mothers with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>11</sup> Educational attainment levels vary widely across Rhode Island.<sup>12</sup>

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

City/Town	% of Births
Central Falls	36%
Newport	13%
Pawtucket	21%
Providence	30%
West Warwick	14%
Woonsocket	24%
All Core Cities	26%
Remainder of State	7%
Rhode Island	16%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2005-2009.

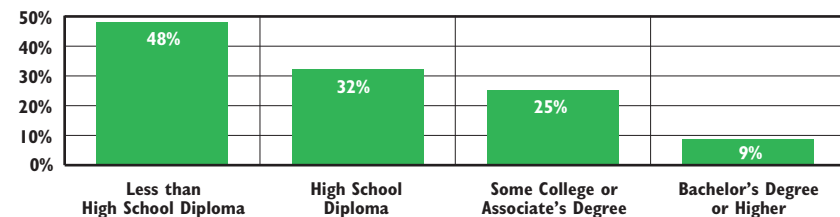
## Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2005-2009



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2005-2009. Data for 2009 are provisional.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2005 and 2009, 44% of all infants were born to mothers with a high school diploma or less, and 40% 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, 2007-2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2009. Table S1702.

◆ The poverty rate among families headed by single females is directly correlated with the householder's education level. In Rhode Island between 2007 and 2009, the poverty rates for families headed by single females ranged from 48% for women with less than a high school diploma to 9% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>14</sup>

Table 5.

**Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2005-2009**

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	621	484	78%	63	10%	52	8%	6	1%
Bristol	885	439	50%	168	19%	196	22%	46	5%
Burrillville	739	274	37%	170	23%	210	28%	51	7%
Central Falls	1,965	148	8%	216	11%	755	38%	713	36%
Charlestown	340	178	52%	60	18%	78	23%	16	5%
Coventry	1,630	708	43%	348	21%	410	25%	119	7%
Cranston	4,208	1,829	43%	751	18%	1,093	26%	375	9%
Cumberland	1,721	981	57%	289	17%	315	18%	78	5%
East Greenwich	511	377	74%	54	11%	49	10%	12	2%
East Providence	2,600	947	36%	502	19%	759	29%	266	10%
Exeter	257	126	49%	46	18%	59	23%	17	7%
Foster	214	98	46%	39	18%	54	25%	14	7%
Glocester	403	204	51%	69	17%	95	24%	22	5%
Hopkinton	437	184	42%	82	19%	128	29%	32	7%
Jamestown	162	125	77%	17	10%	15	9%	1	1%
Johnston	1,373	538	39%	289	21%	405	29%	102	7%
Lincoln	924	465	50%	174	19%	183	20%	50	5%
Little Compton	123	80	65%	20	16%	18	15%	3	2%
Middletown	958	442	46%	196	20%	247	26%	41	4%
Narragansett	473	276	58%	83	18%	73	15%	21	4%
New Shoreham	49	23	47%	14	29%	9	18%	2	4%
Newport	1,485	674	45%	198	13%	323	22%	190	13%
North Kingstown	1,208	679	56%	179	15%	236	20%	62	5%
North Providence	1,588	631	40%	327	21%	438	28%	115	7%
North Smithfield	442	254	57%	77	17%	75	17%	26	6%
Pawtucket	5,535	1,196	22%	965	17%	1,872	34%	1,176	21%
Portsmouth	745	448	60%	126	17%	127	17%	18	2%
Providence	14,524	2,988	21%	1,814	12%	4,488	31%	4,410	30%
Richmond	429	230	54%	70	16%	85	20%	34	8%
Scituate	366	202	55%	69	19%	75	20%	10	3%
Smithfield	705	415	59%	119	17%	122	17%	24	3%
South Kingstown	1,125	706	63%	152	14%	180	16%	53	5%
Tiverton	609	282	46%	147	24%	131	22%	36	6%
Warren	526	224	43%	94	18%	141	27%	53	10%
Warwick	4,113	1,837	45%	791	19%	980	24%	328	8%
West Greenwich	245	116	47%	64	26%	48	20%	10	4%
West Warwick	2,006	592	30%	346	17%	701	35%	285	14%
Westerly	1,297	479	37%	279	22%	399	31%	119	9%
Woonsocket	3,332	483	14%	564	17%	1,281	38%	809	24%
Unknown	5	2	NA	1	NA	1	NA	0	NA
Core Cities	28,847	6,081	21%	4,103	14%	9,420	33%	7,583	26%
Remainder of State	32,026	15,281	48%	5,928	19%	7,485	23%	2,162	7%
Rhode Island	60,878	21,364	35%	10,032	16%	16,906	28%	9,745	16%

**Source of Data for Table/Methodology**

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Hospital Discharge Database, 2005-2009. Data for 2009 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 2005 and 2009, maternal education levels were unknown for 2,831 births (5%).

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

**References**

<sup>17</sup> Egerter, S., Braveman, P., Sadegh-Nobari, T., Grossman-Kahn, R. & Dekker, M. (2009). Education matters for health. *Issue Brief 6: Education and Health*. Retrieved January 19, 2010, from www.commissiononhealth.org

<sup>29</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>35</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America. (2008). *America's health starts with healthy children: How do states compare?* Retrieved January 3, 2011, from www.commissiononhealth.org

<sup>4</sup> Gakidou, E., Cowling, K., Lozano, R. & Murray, C. J. L. (2010). Increased educational attainment and its effect on child mortality in 175 countries between 1970 and 2009: A systemic analysis [Abstract]. *The Lancet*, 376(9745), 959-974.

<sup>6</sup> Magnuson, K. A., Sexton, H. R., Davis-Kean, P. E. & Huston, A. C. (2009). Increases in maternal education and young children's language skills. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly: Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 55(3), 319-350.

<sup>8</sup> Nichols, A. & Favreault, M. (2009). *A detailed picture of intergenerational transmission of human capital*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2009. Table B20004.

<sup>11,12,13</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2005-2009. Data for 2009 are provisional.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2009. Table S1702.