

# 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 mother's education level because a significant number of birth records lack information on father's education level.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The level of parental educational attainment can affect many aspects of child well-being. Research shows that there are strong links between parental education levels and a child's school readiness, health in adolescence and the level of education that the child will ultimately achieve.<sup>1</sup> Higher education levels of parents have been shown to contribute to a more supportive home learning environment for children.<sup>2</sup>

Children of parents with higher education levels are much less likely to grow up in economically-disadvantaged households. In the US in 2001, people without a high school diploma earned two-thirds of the earnings of a high school graduate, and one-third of the earnings of an individual with a bachelor's degree.<sup>3</sup>

Children of immigrants and children of color are least likely to have parents

with high educational levels.<sup>4,5</sup> Higher educational attainment increases earnings across all racial and ethnic categories.<sup>6</sup>

Rhode Island has education levels nearly equal to U.S. averages but lags behind other New England states on almost all levels of educational attainment. Compared to the other New England states, Rhode Island has the highest percentage of residents without a high school diploma.<sup>7</sup> There are currently 153,086 adults 25 years and older in Rhode Island with less than a high school diploma.<sup>8</sup> Of these adults, 37% have less than a 9th grade education.<sup>9</sup>

Of the 9,260 Rhode Island children born to mothers with less than a high school diploma between 1998 and 2002, 100 were to teen mothers under the age of 15 and 1,675 were to mothers from 15 to 17 years old.<sup>10</sup> Teen mothers are far less likely to complete high school than teenage women who did not give birth.<sup>11</sup>

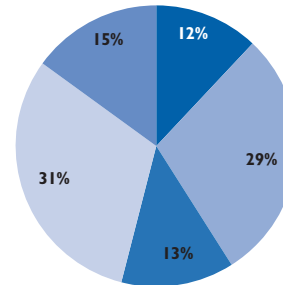
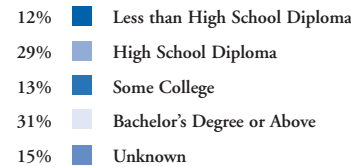
Percent of Total Births to Mothers with Less than 12 Years of Education		
	1990	2001
<b>RI</b>	19%	15%
<b>US</b>	24%	22%
<b>National Rank*</b>	17th	
<b>New England Rank**</b>	6th	

\*1st is best; 50th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: *The Right Start for America's Newborns: City and State Trends*. (January 2004). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

## Births by Paternal Education Level, Rhode Island, 1998-2002



n = 62,611

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1998-2002 average. Data for 2001 and 2002 are provisional.

◆ In Rhode Island between 1998 and 2002, 12% of infants were born to fathers without a high school diploma, and 15% were born to mothers without a high school diploma.<sup>12</sup>

## Adult Education and Literacy in Rhode Island

◆ According to a study of literacy in New England, Rhode Island has the highest percentage of residents below basic literacy standards. Almost one in five (19%) Rhode Islanders read at the lowest literacy level.<sup>13,14</sup>

◆ Adults with the lowest literacy levels are more likely to live in poverty, be unemployed or be underemployed. Children of adults who participate in literacy programs improve their grades and test scores, improve their reading skills, and are less likely to drop out of school.<sup>15</sup>

## Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 1998-2002

Table 4.

CITY/TOWN	ALL BIRTHS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR ABOVE		SOME COLLEGE		HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA		LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barrington	825	644	78%	98	12%	67	8%	6	<1%
Bristol	1,069	477	45%	214	20%	292	27%	75	7%
Burrillville	795	279	35%	169	21%	257	32%	62	8%
Central Falls	1,795	149	8%	219	12%	650	36%	701	39%
Charlestown	456	185	41%	118	26%	107	24%	37	8%
Coventry	2,004	852	43%	398	20%	603	30%	135	7%
Cranston	4,209	1,835	44%	829	20%	1,129	27%	350	8%
Cumberland	1,744	934	54%	327	19%	359	21%	91	5%
East Greenwich	582	401	69%	80	14%	80	14%	17	3%
East Providence	2,452	831	34%	474	19%	839	34%	266	11%
Exeter	339	177	52%	50	15%	82	24%	27	8%
Foster	195	87	45%	40	21%	57	29%	8	4%
Glocester	467	205	44%	119	26%	108	23%	29	6%
Hopkinton	458	174	38%	91	20%	165	36%	21	5%
Jamestown	206	157	76%	19	9%	20	10%	5	2%
Johnston	1,500	600	40%	301	20%	460	31%	119	8%
Lincoln	974	481	49%	185	19%	216	22%	59	6%
Little Compton	176	117	67%	26	15%	26	15%	4	2%
Middletown	1,077	475	44%	251	23%	298	28%	50	5%
Narragansett	618	368	60%	99	16%	106	17%	32	5%
New Shoreham	56	30	54%	15	27%	9	16%	1	2%
Newport	1,609	572	36%	289	18%	441	27%	296	18%
North Kingstown	1,525	923	61%	229	15%	273	18%	71	5%
North Providence	1,571	601	38%	345	22%	471	30%	126	8%
North Smithfield	521	272	52%	84	16%	122	23%	28	5%
Pawtucket	5,119	1,010	20%	918	18%	1,887	37%	1,148	22%
Portsmouth	906	527	58%	171	19%	174	19%	27	3%
Providence	13,980	2,927	21%	1,809	13%	4,834	35%	3,722	27%
Richmond	491	232	47%	98	20%	130	27%	25	5%
Scituate	488	252	52%	93	19%	114	23%	25	5%
Smithfield	801	450	56%	156	20%	163	20%	18	2%
South Kingstown	1,286	806	63%	179	14%	203	16%	77	6%
Tiverton	670	281	42%	182	27%	167	25%	39	6%
Warren	568	227	40%	133	23%	147	26%	54	10%
Warwick	4,402	1,834	42%	887	20%	1,330	30%	303	7%
West Greenwich	302	174	58%	50	17%	67	22%	9	3%
West Warwick	2,028	525	26%	378	19%	793	39%	308	15%
Westerly	1,321	420	32%	299	23%	442	34%	146	11%
Woonsocket	3,024	371	12%	468	16%	1,214	40%	742	25%
Core Cities	27,555	5,554	20%	4,081	15%	9,819	36%	6,917	25%
Remainder of State	35,054	16,308	47%	6,809	19%	9,083	26%	2,342	7%
Rhode Island	62,609	21,862	35%	10,890	17%	18,902	30%	9,259	15%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1998-2002. Data for 2001-2002 are provisional. Data are self-reported and reported by the mother's place of residence, not the place of the infant's birth. Data may not include all births among Rhode Island residents that occurred out of state.

Note that for 1,696 births between 1998 – 2002, the education level of the mother was unknown and for 2 births the place of residence was unknown.

### References for Indicator

- <sup>14</sup> Child Trends Databank web-site: [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org). (February 2003).
- <sup>2</sup> *Knowledge and Skills for Life, Parental Education, OECD Program for International Student Assessment*. Retrieved February 2004 from [www.pisa.oecd.org](http://www.pisa.oecd.org)
- <sup>36</sup> *Money Income in the United States: 2001*. (September 2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- <sup>5</sup> *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2003*. (2003). Washington, DC: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
- <sup>7,8,9</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.
- <sup>10,12</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1998-2002.
- <sup>11</sup> *Teen Mothers: Selected Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Risk Factors*. (June 1998). Washington, DC: United States General Accounting Office.
- <sup>13</sup> Titzel, J. (November 2003). *Moving Toward an Adult Literacy System in Rhode Island*. Providence, RI: The Poverty Institute and The Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council.
- <sup>14</sup> Liebowitz, M. et al. (2002). *Rising to the Literacy Challenge*. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.
- <sup>15</sup> *Fact Sheet: Adult and Family Literacy*. (April 2000). Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.