

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 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.¹ Higher education levels of parents have been shown to contribute to a more supportive home learning environment for children.²

Children of parents with higher education levels are much less likely to grow up in economically-disadvantaged households. In the U.S. in 2001, a person without a high school diploma earned only two thirds of the earnings of a high school graduate and only a little more than one third of the earnings of an individual with a Bachelor's degree.³ Children of immigrants and children of color are least likely to have parents with high

educational levels.^{4,5} Higher educational attainment increases earnings across all racial and ethnic categories.⁶

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.⁷ As of Census 2000, there were 153,086 adults 25 years and older in Rhode Island with less than a high school diploma.⁸ Educational attainment levels vary widely across cities and towns in Rhode Island.

Of the 9,226 Rhode Island children born to mothers with less than a high school diploma between 1999 and 2003, 84 were to teen mothers under the age of 15 and 1,592 were to mothers from 15 to 17 years old.⁹ Teen mothers reduce their academic attainment by close to three years.¹⁰

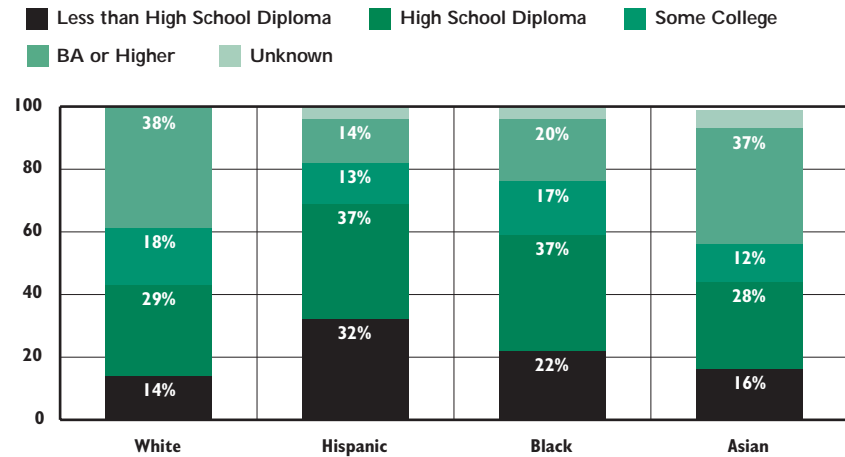
Percent of Total Births to Mothers with Less than 12 Years of Education		
	1990	2002
RI	19%	15%
US	24%	22%
National Rank*		18th
New England Rank**		6th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: *The right start for America's newborns: City and state trends.* (2005). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Educational Attainment at Childbirth by Mother's Race, Rhode Island, 1999-2003



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1999-2003 average. Data for 2002-2003 are provisional. Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%.

◆ Among Rhode Island women giving birth between 1999 and 2003, White women (38%) and Asian women (37%) were more likely than Black women (20%) or Hispanic women (14%) to have a Bachelor's degree or higher.¹¹

Educational Attainment and Income

◆ Higher education is one of the most effective ways that parents can raise their families' incomes.¹² Nationally in 2001, White women with a Bachelor's degree earned a median weekly income of \$744, Black women earned \$692 and Hispanic women earned \$676. Of all working women with only a high school diploma, White women earned \$453, Black women earned \$395, and Hispanic women earned a median weekly income of \$406.¹³

◆ Between 1999 and 2003, of the births to Rhode Island women with a Bachelor's degree or higher, 77% were to mothers with high-income to middle-income. Of the births to women with less than a high school diploma, 26% were to mothers in the high-income to middle-income bracket.¹⁴

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Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 1999-2003

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	839	660	79%	100	12%	64	8%	7	1%
Bristol	1,034	489	47%	202	20%	270	26%	65	6%
Burrillville	803	293	36%	174	22%	246	31%	59	7%
Central Falls	1,862	166	9%	230	12%	686	37%	712	38%
Charlestown	459	196	43%	110	24%	110	24%	35	8%
Coventry	2,003	887	44%	389	19%	590	29%	125	6%
Cranston	4,305	1,929	45%	825	19%	1,134	26%	358	8%
Cumberland	1,763	961	55%	337	19%	353	20%	79	4%
East Greenwich	569	401	70%	79	14%	68	12%	16	3%
East Providence	2,478	884	36%	491	20%	806	33%	258	10%
Exeter	343	168	49%	53	15%	92	27%	27	8%
Foster	196	95	48%	43	22%	46	23%	9	5%
Glocester	429	200	47%	107	25%	94	22%	24	6%
Hopkinton	453	183	40%	91	20%	152	34%	22	5%
Jamestown	206	157	76%	21	10%	21	10%	4	2%
Johnston	1,470	609	41%	296	20%	428	29%	119	8%
Lincoln	988	506	51%	189	19%	207	21%	56	6%
Little Compton	170	111	65%	28	16%	26	NA	3	2%
Middletown	1,075	487	45%	249	23%	289	27%	44	4%
Narragansett	631	378	60%	108	17%	104	16%	26	4%
New Shoreham	54	28	52%	16	30%	9	NA	1	2%
Newport	1,576	577	37%	270	17%	419	27%	295	19%
North Kingstown	1,503	918	61%	217	14%	276	18%	64	4%
North Providence	1,614	631	39%	339	21%	485	30%	130	8%
North Smithfield	521	271	52%	87	17%	120	NA	23	4%
Pawtucket	5,219	1,070	21%	932	18%	1,916	37%	1,150	22%
Portsmouth	869	511	59%	160	18%	164	19%	25	3%
Providence	14,306	3,036	21%	1,876	13%	4,941	35%	3,785	26%
Richmond	500	255	51%	96	19%	121	24%	24	5%
Scituate	472	248	53%	91	19%	108	NA	20	4%
Smithfield	769	437	57%	147	19%	152	20%	17	2%
South Kingstown	1,293	796	62%	185	14%	211	16%	70	5%
Tiverton	655	290	44%	178	27%	150	23%	36	5%
Warren	559	233	42%	132	24%	139	25%	50	9%
Warwick	4,416	1,948	44%	886	20%	1,253	28%	282	6%
West Greenwich	305	179	59%	50	16%	62	NA	11	4%
West Warwick	2,035	564	28%	384	19%	761	37%	306	15%
Westerly	1,308	449	34%	298	23%	410	31%	135	10%
Woonsocket	3,092	413	13%	481	16%	1,201	39%	751	24%
Unknown	15	7	47%	1	7%	3	20%	3	20%
Core Cities	28,090	5,826	21%	4,173	15%	9,924	35%	6,999	25%
Remainder of State	35,052	16,788	48%	6,774	19%	8,760	25%	2,224	6%
Rhode Island	63,157	22,621	36%	10,948	17%	18,687	30%	9,226	15%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1999-2003. Data for 2002-2003 are provisional. Data are self-reported and reported by the mother's place of residence, not the place of the infant's birth. Data does not include births to Rhode Island residents that occurred out of state.

Note that for 1,675 births between 1999 and 2003, the education level of the mother was unknown and for 15 births the place of residence was unknown.

References for Indicator

- ^{1,4} *Parental Education*. (2003). Retrieved January 2003 from Child Trends Databank at www.childtrends.org.
- ² *Knowledge and skills for life*. (2001). Paris, France: OECD Program for International Student Assessment.
- ^{3,8} U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. (2002). *Money income in the United States: 2001*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- ⁵ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2004*. (2004). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- ^{7,8} U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3.
- ^{9,11,14} Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1999-2003.
- ¹⁰ *KIDS COUNT Databook: State profiles of child well-being 2004*. (2004). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ¹² *The effects of parental education on income*. (2004). New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- ¹³ *From poverty to self-sufficiency: Role of postsecondary education in welfare reform* (Fact Sheet). (2003). Washington, DC: Center for Women's Policy Studies.