

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.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 US in 2001, people 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.⁷ There are currently 153,086 Rhode Island adults age 25 years and older with less than a high school diploma.⁸ Of these adults, 37% have less than a 9th grade education.⁹

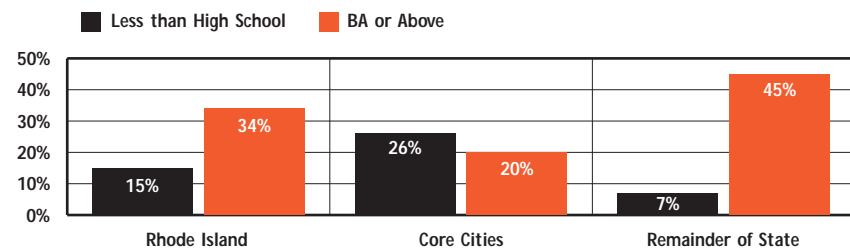
Of the 9,309 Rhode Island children born to mothers with less than a high school diploma between 1997 and 2001, 105 were to teen mothers under the age of 15 and 1,796 were to mothers from 15 to 17 years old.¹⁰ Teen mothers are far less likely to complete high school than teenage women who did not give birth.¹¹

Percent of Total Births to Mothers with Less than 12 Years of Education		
	1990	2000
RI	19%	15%
US	24%	22%
State Rank	18th	

1st is best; 50th is worst

Source: *KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK: State Profiles in Child Well-Being 2002* (2002). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Births by Maternal Educational Attainment, Rhode Island, Core Cities, Remainder of State, 1997-2001



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1997-2001 average.

◆ In Rhode Island between 1997 and 2001, there were 9,309 infants born to mothers with less than a high school diploma. This was 15% of all births in Rhode Island, 26% of all births in the core cities, and 7% of all births in the remainder of the state.¹²

◆ In Rhode Island, Native American children (34%), Hispanic children (34%), Black children (22%) and Asian children (18%) are more likely to be born to a mother with less than a high school diploma than are White children (14%).¹³

Literacy and English Proficiency in Rhode Island

◆ Adults with the lowest literacy levels are more likely to live in poverty and be unemployed or 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.¹⁴

◆ Many of Rhode Island's children have parents who do not speak English well. According to Census 2000, there were 20,799 households that were linguistically-isolated, i.e., households in which no member 14 years old and over speaks English "very well". In addition, there were 36,412 adults who did not speak English or do not speak English "well".¹⁵

Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 1997-2001

Table 3.

CITY/TOWN	ALL BIRTHS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR ABOVE		SOME COLLEGE		HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA		LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barrington	820	617	75%	107	13%	75	9%	6	1%
Bristol	1,067	466	44%	219	21%	293	28%	77	7%
Burrillville	781	247	32%	183	23%	259	33%	62	8%
Central Falls	1,781	132	7%	220	12%	645	36%	704	40%
Charlestown	446	175	39%	112	25%	114	26%	39	9%
Coventry	1,924	794	41%	391	20%	595	31%	131	7%
Cranston	4,171	1,755	42%	848	20%	1,159	28%	340	8%
Cumberland	1,701	851	50%	346	20%	373	22%	101	6%
East Greenwich	588	412	70%	83	14%	75	13%	12	2%
East Providence	2,499	828	33%	480	19%	875	35%	268	11%
Exeter	341	170	50%	52	15%	97	28%	19	6%
Foster	197	85	43%	41	21%	58	29%	10	5%
Glocester	464	190	41%	124	27%	117	25%	27	6%
Hopkinton	488	185	38%	97	20%	175	36%	24	5%
Jamestown	205	163	80%	18	9%	15	7%	4	2%
Johnston	1,492	592	40%	317	21%	454	30%	106	7%
Lincoln	990	472	48%	193	20%	234	24%	58	6%
Little Compton	157	98	62%	22	14%	28	18%	6	4%
Middletown	1,083	457	42%	258	24%	309	29%	54	5%
Narragansett	667	393	59%	115	17%	121	18%	29	4%
New Shoreham	57	29	51%	15	26%	9	16%	2	4%
Newport	1,645	559	34%	317	19%	457	28%	296	18%
North Kingstown	1,500	916	61%	227	15%	266	18%	71	5%
North Providence	1,576	596	38%	345	22%	474	30%	128	8%
North Smithfield	515	258	50%	95	18%	124	24%	25	5%
Pawtucket	5,030	970	19%	867	17%	1,906	38%	1,121	22%
Portsmouth	917	520	57%	182	20%	179	20%	26	3%
Providence	13,589	2,759	20%	1,723	13%	4,677	34%	3,725	27%
Richmond	473	215	46%	95	20%	131	28%	28	6%
Scituate	506	255	50%	104	21%	117	23%	23	5%
Smithfield	805	447	56%	160	20%	159	20%	21	3%
South Kingstown	1,298	781	60%	193	15%	213	16%	90	7%
Tiverton	649	246	38%	163	25%	186	29%	53	8%
Warren	582	224	39%	129	22%	161	28%	58	10%
Warwick	4,428	1,761	40%	936	21%	1,348	30%	329	7%
West Greenwich	297	158	53%	49	17%	77	26%	10	3%
West Warwick	2,024	495	25%	381	19%	788	39%	335	17%
Westerly	1,375	406	30%	303	22%	496	36%	155	11%
Woonsocket	2,980	360	12%	472	16%	1,200	40%	736	25%
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>27,049</i>	<i>5,275</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>3,980</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>9,673</i>	<i>36%</i>	<i>6,917</i>	<i>26%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>35,059</i>	<i>15,762</i>	<i>45%</i>	<i>7,002</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>9,366</i>	<i>27%</i>	<i>2,392</i>	<i>7%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>62,108</i>	<i>21,037</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>10,982</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>19,039</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>9,309</i>	<i>15%</i>

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1997-2001. Data for 1999-2001 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 1,741 births between 1997 – 2001, the education level of the mother was unknown and for two births the place of residence was unknown.

References for Indicator

- ¹⁴ *Parental Education, Child Trends Databank*, February 2003, www.childtrends.org
- ² *Knowledge and Skills for Life, Parental Education, OECD Programme for International Student Assessment*, February 2003, www.pisa.oecd.org
- ^{3,6} *Money Income in the United States: 2001* (September 2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- ⁵ *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2002* (2002). Washington, DC: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
- ^{7,8,9,15} U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.
- ^{10,12,13} Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, Maternal and Child Health Database, 1997-2001.
- ¹¹ *Teen Mothers: Selected Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Risk Factors* (June 1998). Washington, DC: United States General Accounting Office.
- ¹⁴ *Fact Sheet: Adult and Family Literacy* (April 2000). Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.