

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.

SIGNIFICANCE

Parental educational attainment can have an impact on many aspects of child well-being, including children's health and health-related behaviors, school readiness, educational achievement, and involvement in pro-social activities.¹ Children of parents without high school degrees are more likely to struggle in school, including receiving lower achievement scores, repeating grades, and failing to graduate from high school.²

Infant mortality rates increase as mother's education levels decrease.³ In Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021, babies born to mothers with a high school degree or less had a higher infant mortality rate (5.5 per 1,000) than babies born to mothers with more advanced education (3.3 per 1,000 births).⁴

Children of more educated parents participate in early learning programs and home literacy activities more frequently and enter school with higher levels of academic skills. Increasing maternal education can improve children's school readiness, language and

academic skills, health, and educational attainment. Higher levels of parental education can decrease the likelihood that a child will live in poverty.^{5,6,7,8} Between 2017 and 2021, women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earned twice as much as those with less than a high school diploma and 1.7 times more than women with a high school diploma.⁹

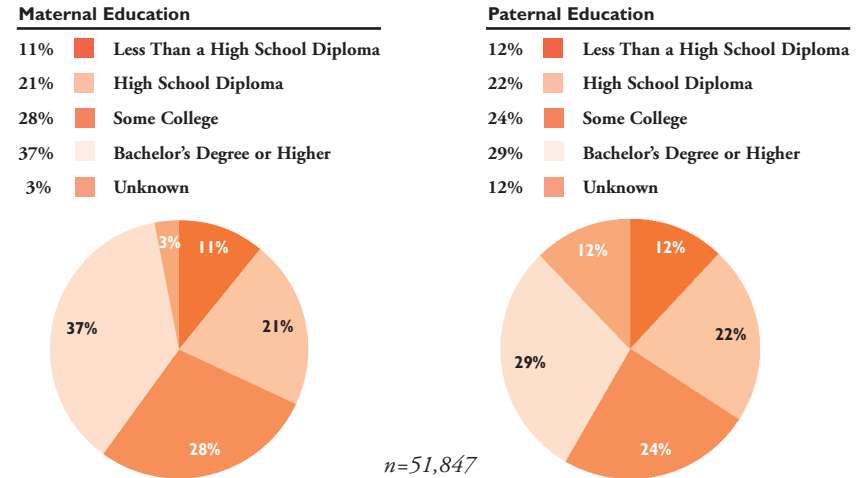
Between 2017 and 2021, 11% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 65% were to mothers with at least some college education.¹⁰ Nationally in 2021, 11% of children under age 18 lived in families in which the head of household had less than a high school diploma, and 47% lived in families in which the head of household had an associate degree or higher.¹¹

Births to Mothers with Less Than a High School Diploma, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

RACE/ETHNICITY	% OF BIRTHS
All Races	11%
American Indian	23%
Asian	7%
Black	12%
Hispanic	25%
White	7%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2017-2021.

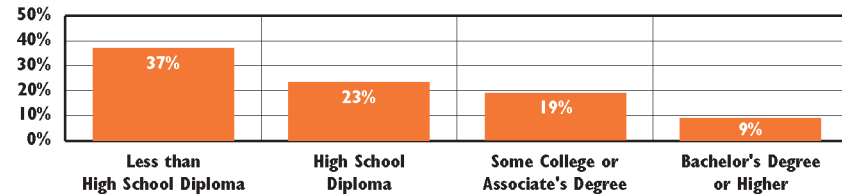
Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2017-2021



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2017-2021. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021, 32% of all infants were born to mothers with a high school diploma or less, and 34% were born to fathers with a high school diploma or less.¹²

Poverty Rates for Families Headed by Single Women by Educational Attainment, Rhode Island, 2017-2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table S1702.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2017 and 2021, 37% of families headed by single women with less than a high school diploma lived in poverty, compared with 9% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.¹³

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Table 5.

Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2017-2021

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL # OF BIRTHS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR ABOVE		SOME COLLEGE		HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA		LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barrington	567	456	80%	61	11%	24	4%	5	*
Bristol	679	361	53%	186	27%	91	13%	29	4%
Burrillville	650	241	37%	234	36%	133	20%	28	4%
Central Falls	1,540	116	8%	368	24%	474	31%	505	33%
Charlestown	270	128	47%	70	26%	47	17%	14	5% [^]
Coventry	1,463	641	44%	481	33%	250	17%	59	4%
Cranston	3,797	1,617	43%	1,117	29%	682	18%	282	7%
Cumberland	1,713	1,007	59%	375	22%	202	12%	56	3%
East Greenwich	551	430	78%	70	13%	28	5%	7	*
East Providence	2,247	901	40%	677	30%	443	20%	159	7%
Exeter	237	138	58%	46	19%	33	14%	13	6% [^]
Foster	205	91	44%	68	33%	32	16%	8	*
Glocester	345	167	48%	121	35%	45	13%	4	*
Hopkinton	334	156	47%	93	28%	64	19%	13	4% [^]
Jamestown	136	99	73%	25	18%	6	*	3	*
Johnston	1,338	509	38%	428	32%	282	21%	81	6%
Lincoln	898	492	55%	227	25%	118	13%	39	4%
Little Compton	76	51	67%	18	24%	2	*	0	*
Middletown	805	435	54%	188	23%	127	16%	47	6%
Narragansett	266	159	60%	62	23%	32	12%	8	*
New Shoreham	25	9	36% [^]	11	44% [^]	3	*	1	*
Newport	1,092	495	45%	210	19%	208	19%	161	15%
North Kingstown	1,098	672	61%	236	21%	127	12%	45	4%
North Providence	1,576	628	40%	528	34%	273	17%	101	6%
North Smithfield	469	239	51%	142	30%	60	13%	10	*
Pawtucket	4,417	956	22%	1,412	32%	1,214	27%	620	14%
Portsmouth	665	442	66%	153	23%	50	8%	11	2% [^]
Providence	11,913	2,585	22%	3,066	26%	3,049	26%	2,630	22%
Richmond	307	159	52%	87	28%	47	15%	7	*
Scituate	432	234	54%	123	28%	53	12%	13	3% [^]
Smithfield	734	408	56%	216	29%	78	11%	16	2% [^]
South Kingstown	830	546	66%	153	18%	76	9%	32	4%
Tiverton	565	260	46%	184	33%	77	14%	25	4%
Warren	419	199	47%	133	32%	66	16%	17	4% [^]
Warwick	3,620	1,686	47%	1,120	31%	612	17%	138	4%
West Greenwich	247	134	54%	71	29%	35	14%	5	*
West Warwick	1,512	406	27%	559	37%	389	26%	127	8%
Westerly	907	397	44%	259	29%	173	19%	54	6%
Woonsocket	2,668	383	14%	770	29%	882	33%	532	20%
Unknown**	234	80	34%	76	32%	48	21%	24	11%
Four Core Cities	20,538	4,040	20%	5,616	27%	5,619	27%	4,287	21%
Remainder of State	31,075	14,993	48%	8,732	28%	4,968	16%	1,618	5%
Rhode Island	51,847	19,113	37%	14,424	28%	10,635	21%	5,929	11%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2017-2021. 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 communities and the state because the number and percentage of births with unknown parental education levels are not included in this table. Between 2017 and 2021, maternal education levels were unknown for 1,746 births (3%).

*The data are statistically unreliable, and rates are not reported and should not be calculated.

[^]The data are statistically unstable, and rates or percentages should be interpreted with caution.

**Unknown births have missing maternal residence data.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

References

¹ *Parental education*. (2015). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

^{2,5} Hussar, B., et al. (2020). *The condition of education 2020* (NCES 2020-144). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

³ Green, T., & Hamilton, T. G. (2019). Maternal educational attainment and infant mortality in the United States: Does the gradient vary by race/ethnicity and nativity? *Demographic Research*, 41, 713-752.

^{4,10,12} Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2017-2021.

⁶ Napoli, A., Korucu, I., Lin, J., Schmitt, S., & Purpura, D. (2021). Characteristics related to parent-child literacy and numeracy practices in preschool. *Frontiers in Education*, 6:535682.

⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *Characteristics of Children's Families. Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/ccc>.

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