

# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

Infant mortality rates increase as mother's education levels decrease.<sup>3</sup> For example, in Rhode Island between 2014-2018, babies born to mothers with a high school degree or less had a higher infant mortality rate (5.3 per 1,000) than babies born to mothers with more advanced education (3.2 per 1,000 births).<sup>4</sup>

Children of more highly 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,

employment opportunities, and earnings.<sup>5,6,7</sup> Higher levels of parental education can decrease the likelihood that a child will live in poverty.<sup>8</sup> Between 2014-2018, women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earned 2.3 times more than those with less than a high school diploma and 1.7 times more than women with a high school diploma.<sup>9</sup>

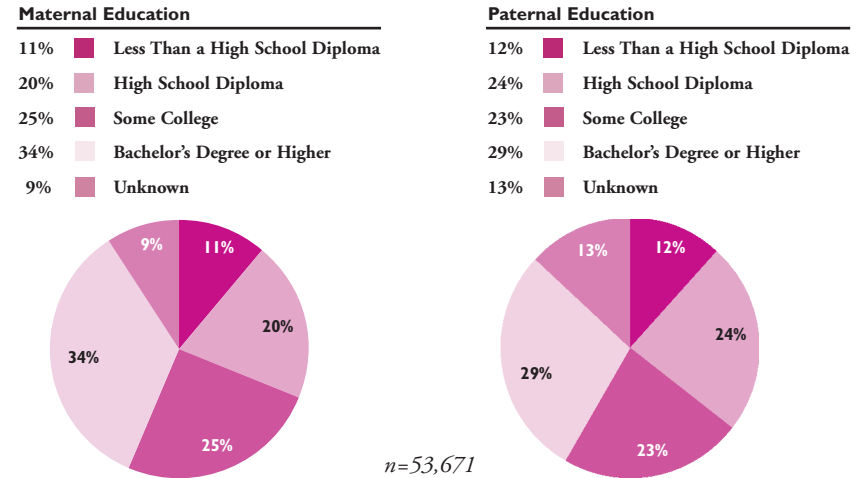
Between 2014-2018, 11% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 59% were to mothers with at least some college education.<sup>10</sup> Nationally in 2017, 12% of school-aged children lived with mothers with less than a high school diploma, and 65% had mothers with at least some college education.<sup>11</sup>

## Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma, Rhode Island, 2014-2018

| CITY/TOWN          | % OF BIRTHS |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Central Falls      | 33%         |
| Pawtucket          | 15%         |
| Providence         | 21%         |
| Woonsocket         | 18%         |
| Four Core Cities   | 20%         |
| Remainder of State | 5%          |
| Rhode Island       | 11%         |

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2014-2018.

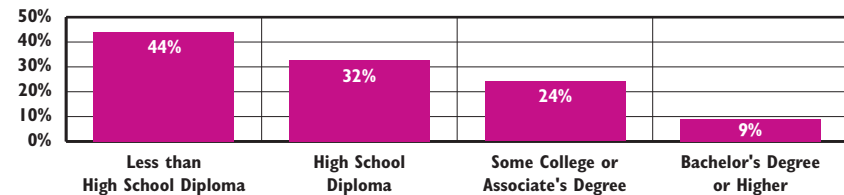
## Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2014-2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2014-2018.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2014 and 2018, 31% of all infants were born to mothers with a high school diploma or less, and 36% were born to fathers with a high school diploma or less.<sup>12</sup>

## Poverty Rates for Families Headed by Single Women by Educational Attainment, Rhode Island, 2014-2018



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014-2018. Table S1702.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2014 and 2018, 44% 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.<sup>13</sup>

# Mother's Education Level

Table 4.

Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2014-2018

| 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         | 551               | 416                        | 75%              | 52           | 9%               | 28                  | 5%  | 9                               | *               |
| Bristol            | 681               | 307                        | 45%              | 191          | 28%              | 116                 | 17% | 33                              | 5%              |
| Burrillville       | 660               | 219                        | 33%              | 206          | 31%              | 151                 | 23% | 40                              | 6%              |
| Central Falls      | 1,598             | 98                         | 6%               | 325          | 20%              | 447                 | 28% | 525                             | 33%             |
| Charlestown        | 257               | 103                        | 40%              | 67           | 26%              | 54                  | 21% | 14                              | 5% <sup>^</sup> |
| Coventry           | 1,485             | 593                        | 40%              | 474          | 32%              | 263                 | 18% | 67                              | 5%              |
| Cranston           | 3,889             | 1,602                      | 41%              | 1,037        | 27%              | 678                 | 17% | 259                             | 7%              |
| Cumberland         | 1,783             | 980                        | 55%              | 399          | 22%              | 213                 | 12% | 57                              | 3%              |
| East Greenwich     | 520               | 375                        | 72%              | 59           | 11%              | 32                  | 6%  | 9                               | *               |
| East Providence    | 2,301             | 881                        | 38%              | 589          | 26%              | 479                 | 21% | 177                             | 8%              |
| Exeter             | 242               | 127                        | 52%              | 55           | 23%              | 33                  | 14% | 15                              | 6% <sup>^</sup> |
| Foster             | 176               | 63                         | 36%              | 62           | 35%              | 31                  | 18% | 8                               | *               |
| Glocester          | 347               | 149                        | 43%              | 122          | 35%              | 47                  | 14% | 7                               | *               |
| Hopkinton          | 282               | 124                        | 44%              | 71           | 25%              | 51                  | 18% | 16                              | 6% <sup>^</sup> |
| Jamestown          | 119               | 81                         | 68%              | 24           | 20%              | 2                   | *   | 1                               | *               |
| Johnston           | 1,297             | 470                        | 36%              | 406          | 31%              | 241                 | 19% | 76                              | 6%              |
| Lincoln            | 966               | 489                        | 51%              | 250          | 26%              | 127                 | 13% | 40                              | 4%              |
| Little Compton     | 82                | 40                         | 49%              | 26           | 32%              | 6                   | *   | 1                               | *               |
| Middletown         | 850               | 428                        | 50%              | 199          | 23%              | 127                 | 15% | 35                              | 4%              |
| Narragansett       | 286               | 166                        | 58%              | 61           | 21%              | 31                  | 11% | 10                              | *               |
| New Shoreham       | 42                | 14                         | 33% <sup>^</sup> | 16           | 38% <sup>^</sup> | 4                   | *   | 2                               | *               |
| Newport            | 1,247             | 541                        | 43%              | 216          | 17%              | 221                 | 18% | 163                             | 13%             |
| North Kingstown    | 1,113             | 623                        | 56%              | 214          | 19%              | 152                 | 14% | 47                              | 4%              |
| North Providence   | 1,601             | 606                        | 38%              | 462          | 29%              | 309                 | 19% | 90                              | 6%              |
| North Smithfield   | 404               | 190                        | 47%              | 115          | 28%              | 53                  | 13% | 14                              | 3% <sup>^</sup> |
| Pawtucket          | 4,809             | 960                        | 20%              | 1,316        | 27%              | 1,253               | 26% | 736                             | 15%             |
| Portsmouth         | 654               | 387                        | 59%              | 150          | 23%              | 57                  | 9%  | 11                              | 2% <sup>^</sup> |
| Providence         | 12,406            | 2,469                      | 20%              | 2,787        | 22%              | 2,997               | 24% | 2,616                           | 21%             |
| Richmond           | 281               | 142                        | 51%              | 61           | 22%              | 51                  | 18% | 9                               | *               |
| Scituate           | 410               | 201                        | 49%              | 120          | 29%              | 49                  | 12% | 10                              | *               |
| Smithfield         | 691               | 378                        | 55%              | 179          | 26%              | 84                  | 12% | 11                              | 2% <sup>^</sup> |
| South Kingstown    | 792               | 467                        | 59%              | 134          | 17%              | 95                  | 12% | 41                              | 5%              |
| Tiverton           | 598               | 261                        | 44%              | 183          | 31%              | 91                  | 15% | 30                              | 5% <sup>^</sup> |
| Warren             | 444               | 178                        | 40%              | 130          | 29%              | 86                  | 19% | 22                              | 5% <sup>^</sup> |
| Warwick            | 3,814             | 1,669                      | 44%              | 1,104        | 29%              | 667                 | 17% | 168                             | 4%              |
| West Greenwich     | 235               | 123                        | 52%              | 51           | 22%              | 36                  | 15% | 8                               | *               |
| West Warwick       | 1,710             | 442                        | 26%              | 573          | 34%              | 438                 | 26% | 168                             | 10%             |
| Westerly           | 922               | 392                        | 43%              | 234          | 25%              | 203                 | 22% | 55                              | 6%              |
| Woonsocket         | 2,808             | 392                        | 14%              | 698          | 25%              | 920                 | 33% | 515                             | 18%             |
| Unknown**          | 318               | 136                        | 43%              | 89           | 28%              | 51                  | 16% | 13                              | 4% <sup>^</sup> |
| Four Core Cities   | 21,621            | 3,919                      | 18%              | 5,126        | 24%              | 5,617               | 26% | 4,392                           | 20%             |
| Remainder of State | 31,732            | 14,227                     | 45%              | 8,292        | 26%              | 5,306               | 17% | 1,723                           | 5%              |
| Rhode Island       | 53,671            | 18,282                     | 34%              | 13,507       | 25%              | 10,974              | 20% | 6,128                           | 11%             |

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2014-2018. 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 2014 and 2018, maternal education levels were unknown for 4,780 births (9%).

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

<sup>^</sup>The data are statistically unstable, and rates or percentages should be interpreted with caution.

\*\* Unknown births include three births with missing maternal residence data.

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

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Parental education*. (2015). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *The condition of education 2018*. Retrieved February 11, 2019, from [nces.ed.gov](https://nces.ed.gov)
- <sup>3</sup> Green, T. & Hamilton, T.G. (2019). Maternal education attainment and infant mortality in the United States: Does the gradient vary by race/ethnicity and nativity? *Demographic Research*, 41, 713-752.
- <sup>4,10,12</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2014-2018.
- <sup>5</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States. (2015). *The economics of early childhood investments*. Retrieved February 11, 2019, from [obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early\\_childhood\\_report\\_update\\_final\\_non-embargo.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early_childhood_report_update_final_non-embargo.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> *Early school readiness*. (2015). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

(continued on page 174)