

# 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> In Rhode Island between 2015-2019, babies born to mothers with a high school degree or less had a higher infant mortality rate (6.0 per 1,000) than babies born to mothers with more advanced education (3.6 per 1,000 births).<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5,6,7,8</sup> Between 2015 and 2019, women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earned 2.3 times more than those with less than a high school diploma and 1.6 times more than women with a high school diploma.<sup>9</sup>

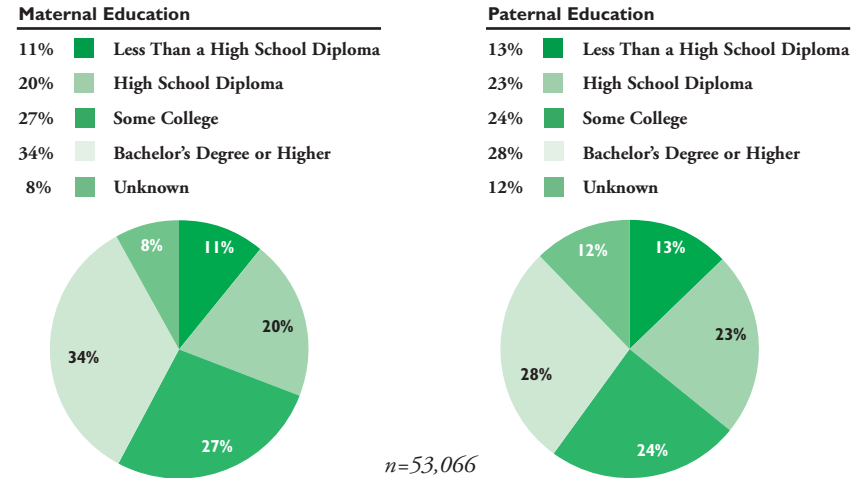
Between 2015 and 2019, 11% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 61% were to mothers with at least some college education.<sup>10</sup> Nationally in 2019, 12% of children under 18 lived in families in which the head of household had less than a high school diploma, and 45% lived in families in which the head of household had an associate degree or higher.<sup>11</sup>

## Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma, Rhode Island, 2015-2019

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

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2015-2019.

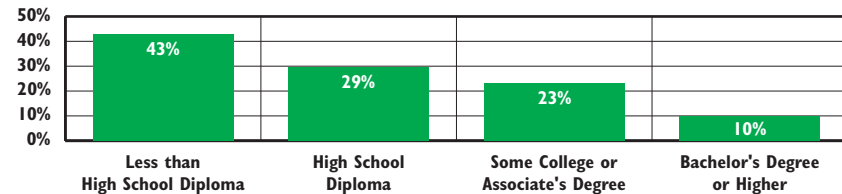
## Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2015-2019



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2015-2019.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2015 and 2019, 31% of all infants were born to mothers with a high school diploma or less, and 35% 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, 2015-2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019. Table S1702.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2015 and 2019, 43% of families headed by single women with less than a high school diploma lived in poverty, compared with 10% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>13</sup>

Table 4.

**Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2015-2019**

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	558	419	75%	59	11%	30	5%	9	*
Bristol	672	316	47%	194	29%	100	15%	35	5%
Burrillville	635	210	33%	224	35%	128	20%	31	5%
Central Falls	1,567	101	6%	334	21%	441	28%	513	33%
Charlestown	255	104	41%	66	26%	52	20%	14	5% <sup>^</sup>
Coventry	1,521	611	40%	502	33%	264	17%	63	4%
Cranston	3,920	1,584	40%	1,117	28%	675	17%	275	7%
Cumberland	1,708	956	56%	387	23%	193	11%	60	4%
East Greenwich	529	383	72%	69	13%	28	5%	9	*
East Providence	2,284	870	38%	640	28%	445	19%	186	8%
Exeter	244	134	55%	57	23%	27	11%	14	6% <sup>^</sup>
Foster	180	67	37%	66	37%	28	16%	9	*
Glocester	350	150	43%	131	37%	44	13%	6	*
Hopkinton	332	143	43%	84	25%	63	19%	19	6% <sup>^</sup>
Jamestown	126	87	69%	23	18%	4	*	1	*
Johnston	1,328	478	36%	433	33%	262	20%	67	5%
Lincoln	923	470	51%	245	27%	117	13%	39	4%
Little Compton	79	40	51%	24	30%	4	*	1	*
Middletown	815	398	49%	211	26%	117	14%	45	6%
Narragansett	273	161	59%	62	23%	28	10%	8	*
New Shoreham	38	13	34% <sup>^</sup>	15	39% <sup>^</sup>	2	*	2	*
Newport	1,226	535	44%	220	18%	226	18%	159	13%
North Kingstown	1,106	618	56%	241	22%	139	13%	48	4%
North Providence	1,567	579	37%	508	32%	281	18%	94	6%
North Smithfield	457	198	43%	144	32%	58	13%	19	4% <sup>^</sup>
Pawtucket	4,680	898	19%	1,406	30%	1,217	26%	708	15%
Portsmouth	664	392	59%	164	25%	50	8%	12	2% <sup>^</sup>
Providence	12,184	2,373	19%	2,985	24%	2,913	24%	2,616	21%
Richmond	279	135	48%	71	25%	51	18%	6	*
Scituate	432	208	48%	119	28%	61	14%	12	3% <sup>^</sup>
Smithfield	713	383	54%	209	29%	79	11%	8	1% <sup>^</sup>
South Kingstown	880	520	59%	167	19%	90	10%	42	5%
Tiverton	574	245	43%	185	32%	86	15%	25	4%
Warren	414	174	42%	134	32%	66	16%	20	5% <sup>^</sup>
Warwick	3,785	1,637	43%	1,159	31%	646	17%	150	4%
West Greenwich	229	124	54%	52	23%	36	16%	7	*
West Warwick	1,645	401	24%	586	36%	425	26%	145	9%
Westerly	979	388	40%	277	28%	197	20%	67	7%
Woonsocket	2,765	378	14%	761	28%	884	32%	510	18%
Unknown**	150	40	27%	54	36%	33	22%	17	11% <sup>^</sup>
Four Core Cities	21,196	3,750	18%	5,486	26%	5,455	26%	4,347	21%
Remainder of State	31,720	14,131	45%	8,845	28%	5,102	16%	1,707	5%
Rhode Island	53,066	17,921	34%	14,385	27%	10,590	20%	6,071	11%

**Source of Data for Table/Methodology**

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2015-2019. 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 2015 and 2019, maternal education levels were unknown for 4,099 births (8%).

\*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 have 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>2,5</sup> 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.

<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, 2015-2019.

<sup>6</sup> *Early school readiness*. (2015). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

<sup>7</sup> Egerter, S., Braveman, P., Sadegh-Nobari, T., Grossman-Kahn, R., & Dekker, M. (2011). *Issue brief #5: Exploring the social determinants of health: Education and health*. Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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