

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 2016-2020, babies born to mothers with a high school degree or less had a higher infant mortality rate (4.9 per 1,000) than babies born to mothers with more advanced education (2.7 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 2016 and 2020, women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earned 2.1 times more than those with less than a high school diploma and 1.6 times more than women with a high school diploma.⁹

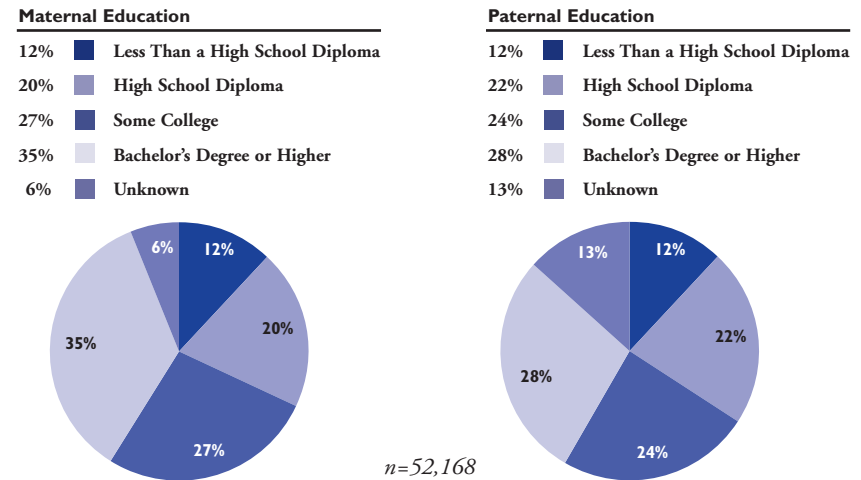
Between 2016 and 2020, 12% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 62% were to mothers with at least some college education.¹⁰ Nationally in 2019, 12% of children under 18 lived in families in which the head of household had less than a high school diploma, and 45% lived in families in which the head of household had an associate degree or higher.¹¹

Births to Mothers with Less Than a High School Diploma, by Race and Ethnicity, Rhode Island, 2016-2020

RACE/ETHNICITY	% OF BIRTHS
All Races	12%
Asian	7%
Black	12%
Hispanic	25%
Native American	22%
White	5%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2016-2020.

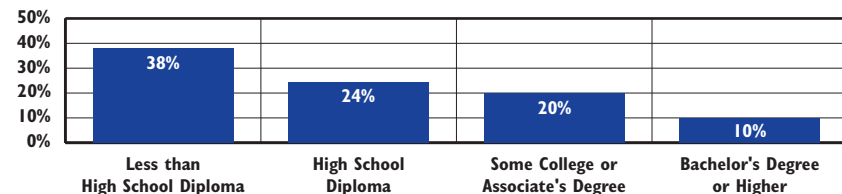
Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2016-2020



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2016-2020. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2016 and 2020, 32% 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.¹²

Poverty Rates for Families Headed by Single Women by Educational Attainment, Rhode Island, 2016-2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020. Table S1702.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2016 and 2020, 38% 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.¹³

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Table 4.

Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2016-2020

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	549	428	78%	61	11%	25	5%	6	*
Bristol	681	352	52%	183	27%	93	14%	33	5%
Burrillville	631	223	35%	229	36%	125	20%	33	5%
Central Falls	1,561	102	7%	349	22%	462	30%	511	33%
Charlestown	267	119	45%	67	25%	51	19%	14	5% [^]
Coventry	1,488	613	41%	496	33%	261	18%	65	4%
Cranston	3,840	1,589	41%	1,111	29%	674	18%	273	7%
Cumberland	1,713	990	58%	376	22%	191	11%	60	4%
East Greenwich	543	406	75%	68	13%	30	6%	9	*
East Providence	2,256	884	39%	656	29%	446	20%	172	8%
Exeter	243	138	57%	50	21%	33	14%	13	5% [^]
Foster	185	76	41%	62	34%	30	16%	8	*
Glocester	344	158	46%	127	37%	42	12%	5	*
Hopkinton	330	146	44%	88	27%	66	20%	13	4% [^]
Jamestown	124	89	72%	24	19%	4	*	2	*
Johnston	1,309	490	37%	414	32%	270	21%	71	5%
Lincoln	898	464	52%	231	26%	128	14%	40	4%
Little Compton	76	43	57%	24	32%	2	*	1	*
Middletown	794	409	52%	194	24%	118	15%	44	6%
Narragansett	265	154	58%	63	24%	30	11%	7	*
New Shoreham	34	10	29% [^]	14	41% [^]	2	*	2	*
Newport	1,174	522	44%	222	19%	225	19%	156	13%
North Kingstown	1,085	635	59%	242	22%	131	12%	47	4%
North Providence	1,540	601	39%	498	32%	280	18%	93	6%
North Smithfield	471	215	46%	143	30%	66	14%	15	3% [^]
Pawtucket	4,594	894	19%	1,426	31%	1,247	27%	687	15%
Portsmouth	660	413	63%	160	24%	42	6%	11	2% [^]
Providence	11,983	2,431	20%	2,995	25%	2,982	25%	2,623	22%
Richmond	295	148	50%	79	27%	51	17%	6	*
Scituate	430	220	51%	119	28%	56	13%	15	3% [^]
Smithfield	726	398	55%	214	29%	78	11%	12	2% [^]
South Kingstown	849	533	63%	158	19%	80	9%	37	4%
Tiverton	563	255	45%	178	32%	79	14%	29	5%
Warren	398	175	44%	131	33%	63	16%	19	5% [^]
Warwick	3,627	1,637	45%	1,103	30%	625	17%	136	4%
West Greenwich	227	124	55%	56	25%	35	15%	8	*
West Warwick	1,575	414	26%	560	36%	407	26%	138	9%
Westerly	949	401	42%	272	29%	179	19%	64	7%
Woonsocket	2,734	385	14%	770	28%	879	32%	533	19%
Unknown**	157	43	27%	57	36%	34	22%	18	11% [^]
Four Core Cities	20,872	3,812	18%	5,540	27%	5,570	27%	4,354	21%
Remainder of State	31,139	14,472	46%	8,673	28%	5,018	16%	1,657	5%
Rhode Island	52,168	18,327	35%	14,270	27%	10,622	20%	6,029	12%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2016-2020. 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 2016 and 2020, maternal education levels were unknown for 2,920 births (6%).

*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, 2016-2020.
- ⁶ *Early school readiness*. (2015). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- ⁷ 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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