

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 also has an impact on his child's development, this indicator uses maternal education level because a significant number of birth records lack information on paternal education level.

SIGNIFICANCE

Parental educational attainment can have an impact on many aspects of child well-being, including children's health and health-related behaviors, children's access to sufficient educational resources, and the level of education they will ultimately achieve. Children of less educated parents are less likely to succeed in school, more likely to be poor for at least half of their lives from birth through age 17, and more likely to be in poor health.¹²

Infant mortality rates increase as mother's education levels decrease.^{3,4} For example, between 2010-2014, Rhode Island mothers with a high school degree or less had a higher infant mortality rate (6.1 per 1,000) than mothers with more education (4.8 per 1,000 births).⁵

Children of more highly educated parents participate in early learning programs and home literacy activities more frequently, enter school with higher levels of academic skills, and, on average,

earn higher reading and math test scores. Increasing maternal education can improve children's school readiness, language and academic skills.^{6,7} Increases in education levels also have been linked to improved health, better employment opportunities, and higher earnings.⁸ Higher levels of parental education can decrease the likelihood that a child will live in poverty.⁹ Women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earn more than twice as much as those with less than a high school diploma.¹⁰

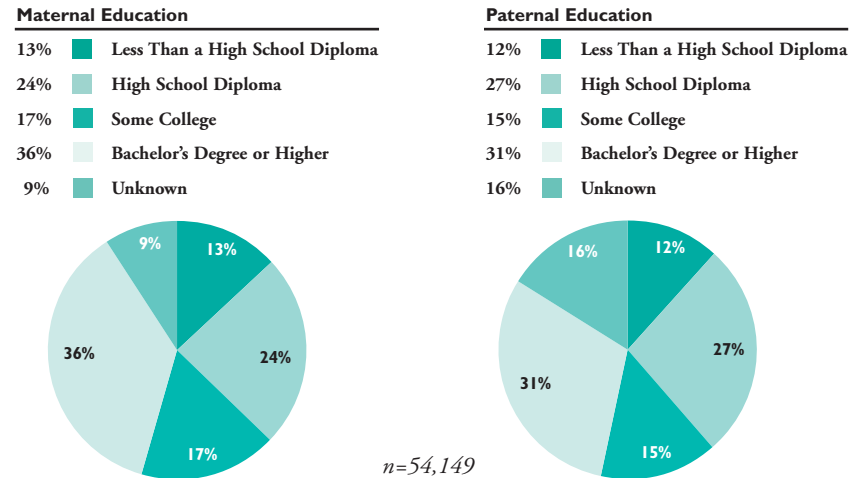
Between 2010 and 2014, 13% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 36% were to mothers with a bachelor's degree or higher.¹¹ Nationally, mothers with infants are more educated than ever before. In 2013, 12% of all U.S. births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma, and 63% were to mothers with at least some college education.¹²

Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma

CITY/TOWN	% OF CHILDREN
Central Falls	36%
Pawtucket	17%
Providence	23%
Woonsocket	20%
Four Core Cities	22%
Remainder of State	6%
Rhode Island	13%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2010-2014.

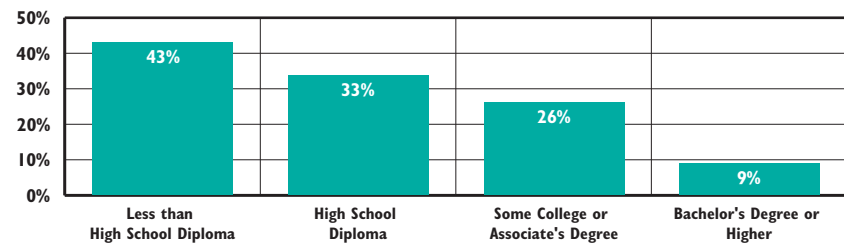
Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2010-2014



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Hospital Discharge Database, 2010-2014.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2010 and 2014, 37% of all infants were born to mothers with a high school diploma or less, and 39% were born to fathers with a high school diploma or less (compared with 39% for both mothers and fathers from 2009-2013).¹³

Poverty Rates for Families Headed by Single Females by Educational Attainment, Rhode Island, 2010-2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Table S1702.

◆ The poverty rate among families headed by single females is related to the mother's educational level. In Rhode Island between 2010 and 2014, 43% of families headed by single females with less than a high school diploma were poor, compared with 9% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.¹⁴

Table 4.

Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2010-2014

CITY/TOWN	TOTAL # OF BIRTHS	BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR ABOVE		SOME COLLEGE		HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA		LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barrington	503	393	78%	44	9%	31	6%	6	1%
Bristol	778	403	52%	154	20%	145	19%	34	4%
Burrillville	632	216	34%	151	24%	179	28%	42	7%
Central Falls	1,619	121	7%	209	13%	527	33%	588	36%
Charlestown	260	116	45%	58	22%	48	18%	16	6%
Coventry	1,417	641	45%	322	23%	283	20%	86	6%
Cranston	3,887	1,713	44%	730	19%	852	22%	310	8%
Cumberland	1,613	890	55%	284	18%	238	15%	68	4%
East Greenwich	552	386	70%	64	12%	59	11%	10	2%
East Providence	2,453	1,018	42%	444	18%	619	25%	181	7%
Exeter	256	127	50%	35	14%	55	21%	25	10%
Foster	163	70	43%	36	22%	35	21%	6	4%
Glocester	342	165	48%	71	21%	61	18%	16	5%
Hopkinton	357	151	42%	81	23%	82	23%	23	6%
Jamestown	117	81	69%	10	9%	8	7%	2	2%
Johnston	1,282	521	41%	265	21%	303	24%	94	7%
Lincoln	901	450	50%	185	21%	156	17%	54	6%
Little Compton	79	44	56%	12	15%	15	19%	2	3%
Middletown	834	440	53%	138	17%	160	19%	36	4%
Narragansett	373	210	56%	64	17%	49	13%	13	3%
New Shoreham	56	30	54%	10	18%	12	21%	2	4%
Newport	1,295	609	47%	156	12%	248	19%	143	11%
North Kingstown	1,020	576	56%	151	15%	159	16%	53	5%
North Providence	1,582	667	42%	347	22%	358	23%	88	6%
North Smithfield	412	217	53%	74	18%	77	19%	19	5%
Pawtucket	4,941	1,151	23%	881	18%	1,491	30%	838	17%
Portsmouth	573	333	58%	106	18%	85	15%	13	2%
Providence	12,890	2,937	23%	1,916	15%	3,624	28%	2,995	23%
Richmond	348	190	55%	54	16%	59	17%	15	4%
Scituate	331	180	54%	67	20%	56	17%	9	3%
Smithfield	593	365	62%	83	14%	91	15%	18	3%
South Kingstown	897	517	58%	130	14%	128	14%	47	5%
Tiverton	528	234	44%	97	18%	113	21%	25	5%
Warren	458	180	39%	95	21%	114	25%	42	9%
Warwick	3,831	1,833	48%	770	20%	766	20%	221	6%
West Greenwich	241	118	49%	50	21%	47	20%	9	4%
West Warwick	1,789	532	30%	364	20%	535	30%	238	13%
Westerly	959	346	36%	208	22%	259	27%	78	8%
Woonsocket	2,946	504	17%	493	17%	1,018	35%	603	20%
Unknown	41	25	NA	6	NA	5	NA	1	NA
Four Core Cities	22,396	4,713	21%	3,499	16%	6,660	30%	5,024	22%
Remainder of State	31,712	14,962	47%	5,910	19%	6,485	20%	2,044	6%
Rhode Island	54,149	19,700	36%	9,415	17%	13,150	24%	7,069	13%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Hospital Discharge Database, 2010-2014. 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 2010 and 2014, maternal education levels were unknown for 4,815 births (9%).

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

References

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