

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 2018 and 2022, babies born to mothers with a high school degree or less had a higher infant mortality rate (5.4 per 1,000) than babies born to mothers with more advanced education (3.1 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 2018 and 2022, women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earned twice as much as those with less than a high school diploma and 1.6 times more than women with a high school diploma.⁹

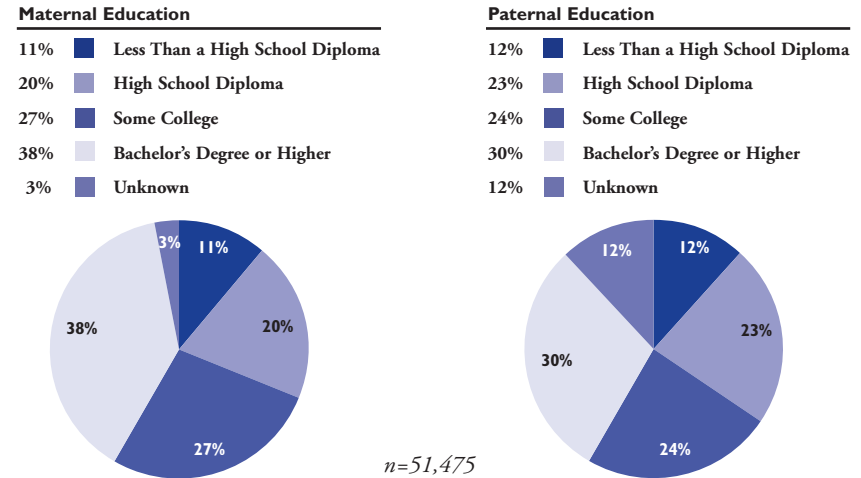
Between 2018 and 2022, 11% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 66% were to mothers with at least some college education.¹⁰ Nationally in 2022, 11% of children under age 18 lived in families in which the head of household had less than a high school diploma, 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, 2018-2022

RACE/ETHNICITY	% OF BIRTHS
All Races	11%
American Indian Alaskan Native	21%
Asian	7%
Black	11%
Hispanic	25%
White	7%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2018-2022.

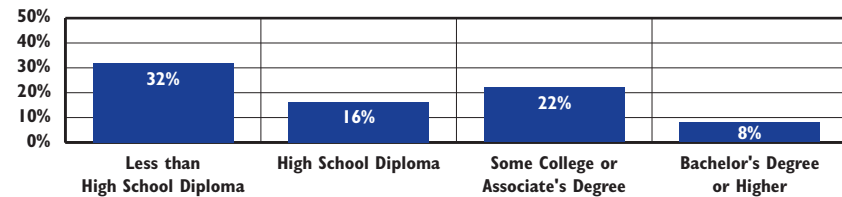
Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2018-2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2018-2022. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

★ In Rhode Island between 2018 and 2022, 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, 2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-2022. Table S1702.

★ In Rhode Island between 2018 and 2022, 32% of families headed by single women with less than a high school diploma lived in poverty, compared with 8% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.¹³

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Table 5.

Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2018-2022

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	585	478	82%	60	10%	21	4%	5	*
Bristol	673	381	57%	177	26%	78	12%	26	4%
Burrillville	654	252	39%	237	36%	124	19%	25	4%
Central Falls	1,505	112	7%	373	25%	449	30%	507	34%
Charlestown	280	146	52%	71	25%	41	15%	14	5% [^]
Coventry	1,491	670	45%	481	32%	250	17%	56	4%
Cranston	3,810	1,641	43%	1,142	30%	668	18%	268	7%
Cumberland	1,740	1,034	59%	387	22%	202	12%	52	3%
East Greenwich	614	483	79%	79	13%	27	4%	9	*
East Providence	2,229	932	42%	644	29%	448	20%	146	7%
Exeter	242	140	58%	51	21%	32	13%	12	5% [^]
Foster	208	95	46%	68	33%	30	14%	8	*
Glocester	359	182	51%	123	34%	45	13%	4	*
Hopkinton	316	148	47%	89	28%	60	19%	12	4% [^]
Jamestown	131	102	78%	19	15% [^]	5	*	3	*
Johnston	1,361	522	38%	433	32%	273	20%	98	7%
Lincoln	914	503	55%	222	24%	129	14%	36	4%
Little Compton	77	52	68%	18	23% [^]	2	*	0	0%
Middletown	763	417	55%	167	22%	120	16%	49	6%
Narragansett	273	170	62%	60	22%	31	11%	8	*
New Shoreham	31	16	52% [^]	12	39% [^] [^]	3	*	0	36% [^]
Newport	1,048	469	45%	205	20%	201	19%	154	15%
North Kingstown	1,094	695	64%	233	21%	113	10%	36	3%
North Providence	1,605	664	41%	524	33%	271	17%	102	6%
North Smithfield	481	252	52%	139	29%	63	13%	10	*
Pawtucket	4,332	982	23%	1,380	32%	1,196	28%	602	14%
Portsmouth	659	442	67%	145	22%	53	8%	11	2% [^]
Providence	11,726	2,651	23%	2,987	25%	3,031	26%	2,572	22%
Richmond	348	184	53%	97	28%	48	14%	11	3% [^]
Scituate	445	246	55%	126	28%	54	12%	11	2% [^]
Smithfield	747	433	58%	207	28%	74	10%	17	2% [^]
South Kingstown	827	549	66%	154	19%	70	8%	30	4%
Tiverton	550	279	51%	159	29%	77	14%	19	3% [^]
Warren	405	202	50%	117	29%	67	17%	14	3%
Warwick	3,528	1,684	48%	1,048	30%	600	17%	139	4%
West Greenwich	249	134	54%	75	30%	33	13%	4	*
West Warwick	1,462	423	29%	518	35%	368	25%	121	8%
Westerly	874	377	43%	247	28%	175	20%	52	6%
Woonsocket	2,604	384	15%	762	29%	855	33%	521	20%
Unknown**	235	83	35%	76	*	44	19%	25	*
Four Core Cities	20,167	4,129	20%	5,502	27%	5,531	27%	4,202	21%
Remainder of State	31,073	15,397	50%	8,534	27%	4,856	16%	1,562	5%
Rhode Island	51,475	19,609	38%	14,112	27%	10,431	20%	5,789	11%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2018-2022. 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 2018 and 2022, maternal education levels were unknown for 1,534 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, 2018-2022.
- 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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