

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 physical and mental health, school readiness, educational achievement, and cognitive abilities.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 2019 and 2023, babies born to mothers with a high school degree or less had a higher infant mortality rate (5.7 per 1,000) than babies born to mothers with more advanced education (3.2 per 1,000 births).⁴

Parental education levels are linked to healthy parenting practices like established routines, which are related to academic achievement. Children of more educated parents participate in early learning programs more frequently. 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 2019 and 2023, women with bachelor's degrees in Rhode Island earned almost 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

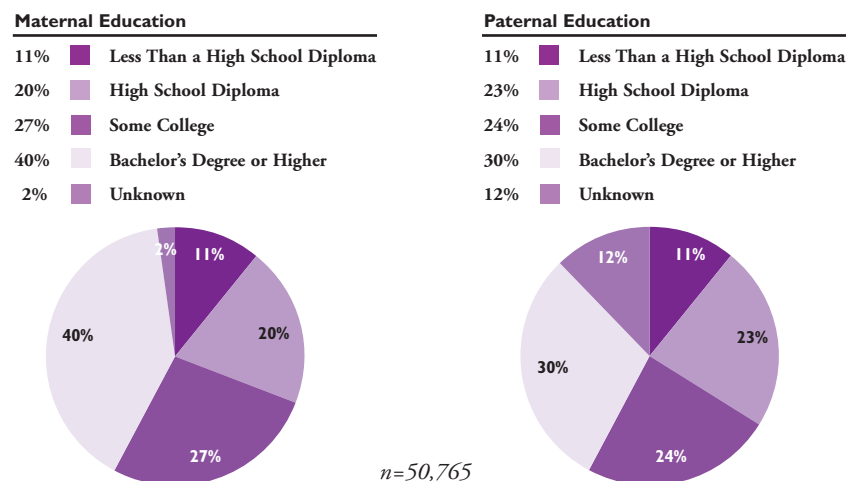
Between 2019 and 2023, 11% of Rhode Island births were to mothers with less than a high school diploma and 66% were to mothers with at least some college education.¹⁰ Nationally in 2023, 11% of children under age 18 lived in families in which the head of household had less than a high school diploma, and 48% 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, 2019-2023

RACE/ETHNICITY	% OF BIRTHS
All Races	11%
American Indian Alaskan Native	23%
Asian	6%
Black	11%
Hispanic	25%
White	7%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2019-2023.

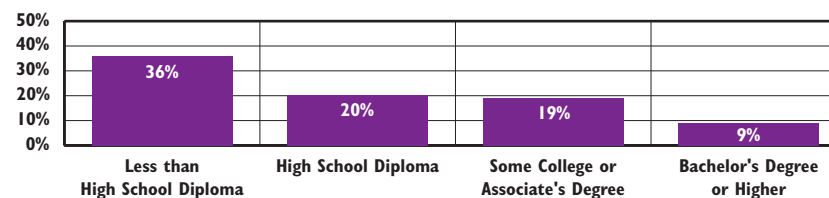
Births by Parental Education Levels, Rhode Island, 2019-2023



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2019-2023. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2019 and 2023, 31% 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, 2019-2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019-2023. Table S1702.

◆ In Rhode Island between 2019 and 2023, 36% 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.¹³

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Table 3.

Births by Education Level of Mother, Rhode Island, 2019-2023

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	570	483	85%	54	9%	17	3%	6	1%
Bristol	676	407	60%	158	23%	81	12%	25	4%
Burrillville	670	276	41%	236	35%	121	18%	25	4%
Central Falls	1,453	118	8%	354	24%	448	31%	493	34%
Charlestown	268	149	56%	69	26%	34	13%	8	3%
Coventry	1,471	701	48%	447	30%	243	17%	54	4%
Cranston	3,884	1,691	44%	1,155	30%	709	18%	267	7%
Cumberland	1,696	1,032	61%	372	22%	195	11%	58	3%
East Greenwich	655	532	81%	77	12%	26	4%	11	2%
East Providence	2,229	1,013	45%	641	29%	410	18%	126	6%
Exeter	225	132	59%	46	20%	33	15%	8	4%
Foster	216	104	48%	67	31%	31	14%	7	3%
Glocester	332	176	53%	109	33%	42	13%	*	*
Hopkinton	332	152	46%	97	29%	69	21%	9	3%
Jamestown	135	112	83%	15	11%	5	4%	3	2%
Johnston	1,368	555	41%	415	30%	282	21%	97	7%
Lincoln	939	525	56%	222	24%	134	14%	40	4%
Little Compton	79	55	70%	19	24%	*	*	0	0%
Middletown	724	401	55%	147	20%	115	16%	53	7%
Narragansett	274	174	64%	68	25%	24	9%	5	2%
New Shoreham	37	19	51% ^	13	35% ^	*	*	*	*
Newport	1,020	469	46%	184	18%	200	20%	153	15%
North Kingstown	1,059	684	65%	223	21%	104	10%	36	3%
North Providence	1,597	676	42%	536	34%	270	17%	87	5%
North Smithfield	490	276	56%	131	27%	62	13%	10	2%
Pawtucket	4,206	999	24%	1,344	32%	1,172	28%	590	14%
Portsmouth	611	416	68%	125	20%	53	9%	12	2%
Providence	11,491	2,678	23%	2,895	25%	3,052	27%	2,547	22%
Richmond	339	187	55%	94	28%	43	13%	10	3%
Scituate	454	270	59%	117	26%	52	11%	8	2%
Smithfield	714	435	61%	189	26%	63	9%	17	2%
South Kingstown	854	580	68%	149	17%	77	9%	25	3%
Tiverton	558	289	52%	156	28%	84	15%	16	3%
Warren	398	208	52%	118	30%	54	14%	14	4%
Warwick	3,476	1,718	49%	1,016	29%	561	16%	136	4%
West Greenwich	243	137	56%	71	29%	29	12%	5	2%
West Warwick	1,421	435	31%	487	34%	365	26%	109	8%
Westerly	823	366	44%	225	27%	166	20%	46	6%
Woonsocket	2,608	408	16%	761	29%	860	33%	521	20%
Unknown**	170	67	39%	49	29%	39	23%	**	**
Four Core Cities	19,758	4,203	21%	5,354	27%	5,532	28%	4,151	21%
Remainder of State	30,837	15,835	51%	8,248	27%	4,754	15%	1,507	5%
Rhode Island	50,765	20,105	40%	13,651	27%	10,325	20%	5,658	11%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal Child Health Database, 2019-2023. 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 2019 and 2023, maternal education levels were unknown for 1,026 births (2%).

*The data are statistically unreliable, and rates are not reported and should not be calculated or the number is suppressed because it is less than five.

^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.

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