

How Ready Is Providence?

EDUCATION LEVELS OF PARENTS

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Why is it important?

Parental education levels are indisputably linked to the early learning and well-being of their children due in large part to the higher salaries that accompany higher education.

Parents who have achieved advanced training are more apt to provide an environment that supports learning. They may be more able to purchase high-quality child care and educational materials, and to take their children to libraries and museums.¹ According to 2007 data from the U.S. Department of Labor, a college graduate earned at least 50% more than an individual without a high school degree and 33% more than a high school graduate.²

Children living in poverty will hear 32 million fewer words by age four than those from higher income families.³ They are less likely to be read to every day than children not living in poverty.⁴

For young children, these differences can have a large influence on school-readiness because language and exposure to books build vocabulary and early literacy skills.⁵ The correlation between the education of a parent and the scholastic achievement of their children lasts throughout children's academic careers.⁶

Children from low-income families are also more likely to have health issues that can impede learning. They are twice as likely to have unrecognized vision problems and three times as likely to have

untreated dental problems as their peers from more economically stable families.⁷

What did we report in 2004?

On average between 1999 and 2002, 66% of births citywide were to women with at least 12 years of education. Geospatial analysis revealed significant variations across Providence neighborhoods. For example, just 50% of mothers with infants in Olneyville

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Table 1

Education Levels of Providence Mothers

Neighborhood	Births to Moms with 12+ Years Ed 1998-2002	Births to Moms with 12+ Years Ed 2003-2007
Blackstone	99%	99%
Charles	77%	78%
College Hill	96%	99%
Downtown	69%	75%
Elmhurst	88%	87%
Elmwood	62%	68%
Federal Hill	62%	62%
Fox Point	80%	88%
Hartford	58%	57%
Hope	94%	95%
Lower South Providence	60%	64%
Manton	75%	75%
Mount Hope	77%	80%
Mount Pleasant	73%	72%
Olneyville	50%	52%
Reservoir	77%	78%
Silver Lake	63%	61%
Smith Hill	58%	62%
South Elmwood	74%	74%
Upper South Providence	59%	59%
Valley	61%	57%
Wanskuck	67%	66%
Washington Park	66%	70%
Wayland	98%	99%
West End	55%	55%
Citywide	66%	68%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health KidsNet database.

What did we report in 2004?

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had high school degrees compared with 99% of mothers in Blackstone. Corresponding child poverty rates were 54% in Olneyville and just 2% in Blackstone. Table 1 provides more detailed information for each of the city's 25 neighborhoods for the 1998-2002 period.⁸

What is happening now?

The citywide percentage of births to mothers with 12 or more years of education increased slightly to 68% between 2003 and 2007. Most city neighborhoods experienced similar minor changes (+/- 4 percentage points) between these two time periods. Exceptions include Downtown (where births to women with 12 years of education increased from 69% of all births between 1998 and 2002 to 75% between 2003 and 2007), Elmwood (62% to 68%) and Fox Point (80% to 88%). Table 1 presents comparative data for the two time periods. Figure 2 (see back cover) compares 2003-2007 education data from Table 1 to child poverty rates for each of the city neighborhoods. With few exceptions, the inverse relationship between parent education and child poverty is evident in Providence, with child poverty rates tending to fall as education levels rise.

Figure 1 geographically presents the 2003-2007 maternal education data. This display provides a clear visual representation contrasting education levels between Providence's more affluent East Side neighborhoods and most of the other city neighborhoods. In the R2LP target neighborhoods, the lightest shading indicates fewer mothers with at least twelve years of schooling than in many other Providence neighborhoods.

Educational attainment of mothers in Providence varied significantly by home language as shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4. English-speaking birth mothers were most likely to have at least 12 years of education at 71% between 1998 and 2002 and 72% between 2003 and 2007 (Table 2). In contrast, Spanish-speaking birth mothers were considerably less likely to have 12 years of education, with 46% and 52% of births in the two time periods. Of note is that educational attainment increased by six points for Spanish-speaking mothers between the two time periods.

Table 2 also shows the dramatic increase observed among the percentage of birth mothers identified as speakers of Southeast Asian languages who had more than 12 years of education. The 1998-2002 average was just 39% compared

Table 2

Percent of Births to Women with 12 or More Years of Education by Home Language

	1998-2002	2003-2007
Citywide	66%	68%
English	71%	72%
Spanish	46%	52%
Southeast Asian	39%	68%
Other	55%	69%

Table 3

Percent of Births to Women with Less Than 8 Years of Education by Home Language

	1998-2002	2003-2007
Citywide	7%	7%
English	3%	2%
Spanish	26%	21%
Southeast Asian	44%	14%
Other	22%	13%

Table 4

Percent of Births to Women with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher by Home Language

	1998-2002	2003-2007
Citywide	20%	21%
English	24%	25%
Spanish	6%	8%
Southeast Asian	7%	7%
Other	22%	22%

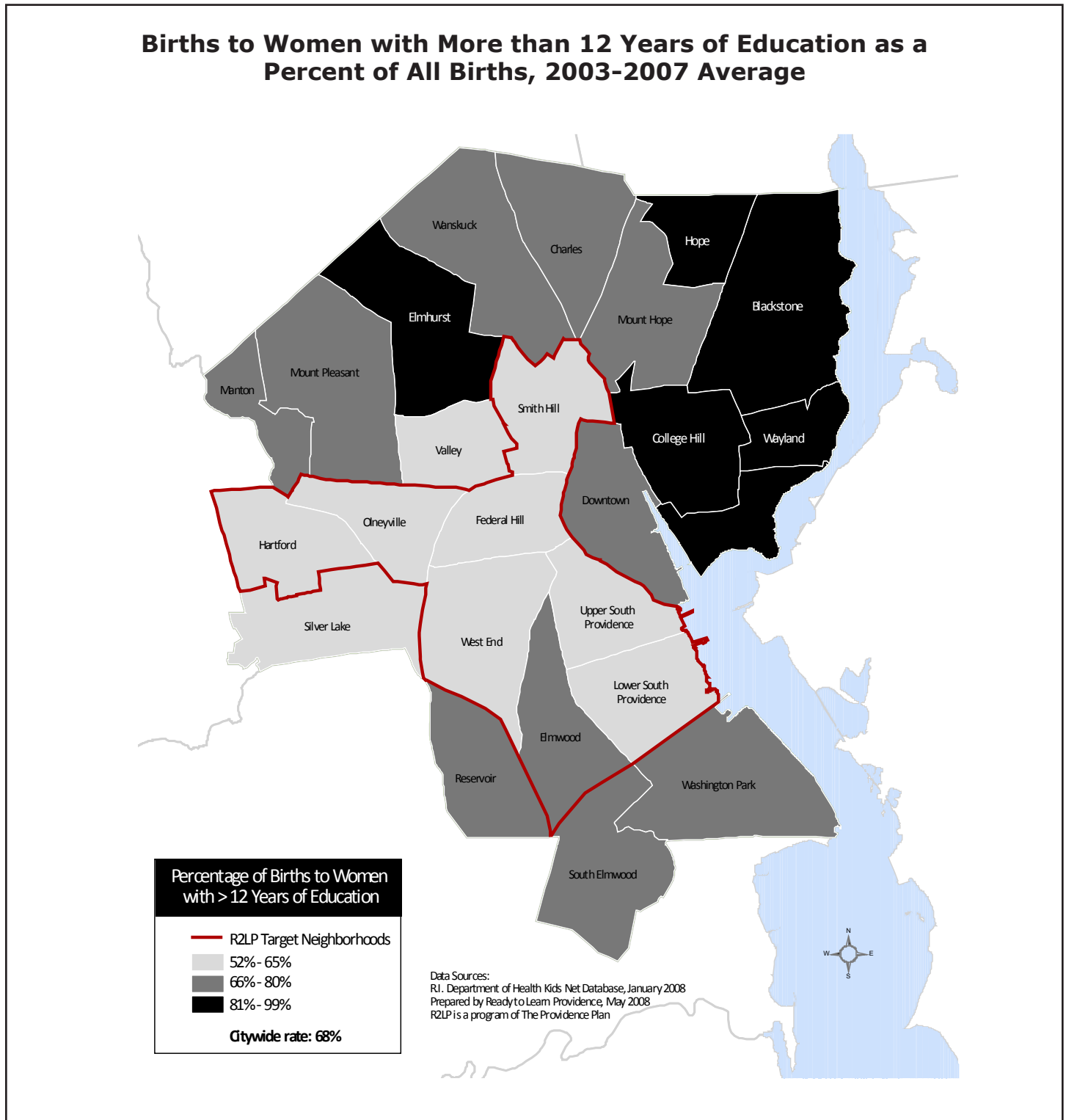
Source for Tables 2-4: RI Department of Health KidsNet Database

to 68% for the 2003-2007 time period. However, due to the relatively small number of mothers speaking Southeast Asian languages (122 and 94 respectively in the two time periods), these numbers should be treated with caution.

By itself, this comparison of groups of mothers with 12 or more years of education masks the disparity apparent at either end of the education spectrum. English-speaking birth mothers are much less likely than those who speak Spanish or Southeast Asian languages to have attained less than an eighth grade education (Table 3) and much more likely to have attained a bachelor's or advanced degree (Table 4).

Between 2003 and 2007, only 2% of English-speaking

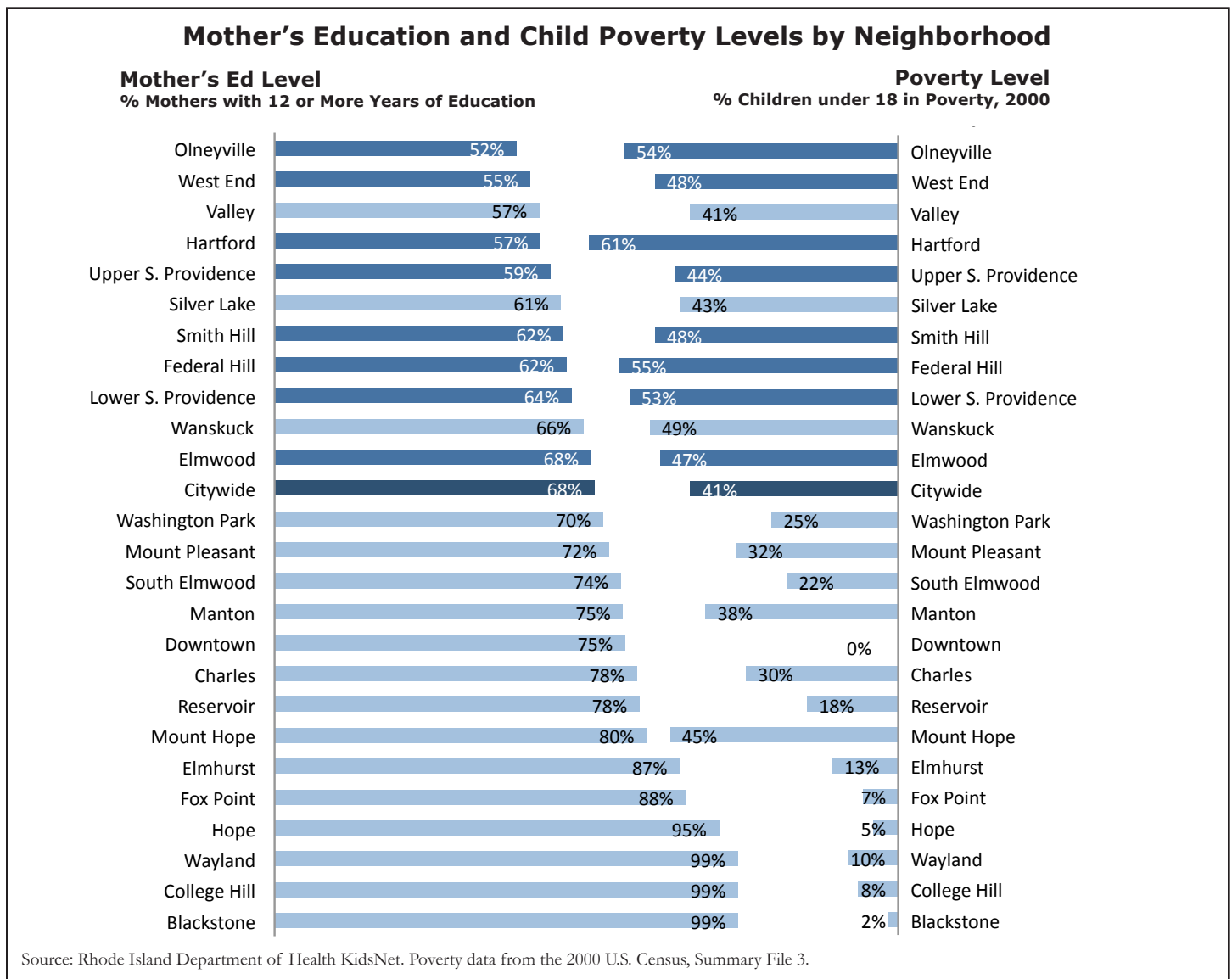
Figure 1



birth mothers in Providence had less than an eighth grade education compared to 21% of Spanish-speaking birth mothers. While slightly less extreme, the gap between higher educa-

tional attainment is also wide, with 25% of English-speaking and 8% of Spanish-speaking birth mothers having a four-year college degree or higher during the same period.

Figure 2



Endnotes

¹Shonkoff, J. & Phillips D., (Eds). (2004). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. ²Retrieved May 19, 2008 from <http://www.bls.gov/emp/emptab7.htm>. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, those without a high school degree earned median weekly wages of \$428, compared to \$604 for those with only a high school diploma and \$987 for those with a bachelor's degree (but no additional degrees). ³ The National Center for Family Literacy. *Family Literacy & You* (n.d.). Retrieved May 1, 2008 from http://www.familit.org/site/c.gtjWJdMQIsE/b.1351223/k.6392/Family_Literacy_You.htm. ⁴Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. (2007, July) America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2007. In *Family reading to young children*. Retrieved May 1, 2008 from <http://childstats.gov/americaschildren07/edu1.asp>. In 2005, 72% of children between three and five years old were read to everyday by someone in their family if their mothers had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 60% of children whose mothers had some post-secondary education, 55% of children whose mothers had only a high school diploma, and 41% of children whose mothers had less than a high school diploma. ⁵Coffman, J. (2005). A Conversation with Richard Rothstein, Complimentary Learning [Electronic version]. *The Evaluation Exchange*, Vol. 11 No. 1, Spring 2005. ⁶For example, The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a set of nationally representative tests overseen by the National Center for Educational Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education, shows that despite trends toward greater proficiency overall, disparity is still large between students whose parents have varying education levels. Eighth grade students whose parents have graduated from college are considerably more likely to score at or above basic or proficient in both reading and math than students whose parents graduated from high school but did not attend college or those whose parents did not graduate from high school. While nearly half of 8th graders whose parents did not finish high school scored below basic (the lowest category) on the NAEP in reading and math, less than one-fifth of those whose parents graduated from college scored in this category Retrieved May 15, 2008 from http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2007/r0013.asp?subtab_id=Tab_2&tab_id=tab1#chart [Reading scores]. http://nationsreportcard.gov/math_2007/m0013.asp?subtab_id=Tab_2&tab_id=tab1#chart [Math scores]. ⁷Coffman, J. (2005). A Conversation with Richard Rothstein, Complimentary Learning [Electronic version]. *The Evaluation Exchange*, Vol. 11 No. 1, Spring 2005. ⁸In the interest of providing the most currently available data consistent with standard 5-year averages, this indicator update presents 1998-2002 (5-year average) data as opposed to 1999-2002 (4-year average) data included in *How Ready Is Providence?* This allows for a direct comparison with most recently available 2003-2007 (5-year average) data from the Rhode Island Department of Health.