

# Births to Mothers with No High School Degree

## Definition

*Births to mothers with no high school degree* is the percent of total births to women with less than a high school diploma.

## Data in context

All children benefit from a strong start in life to become successful adults. High parental educational attainment is associated with a child's school readiness skills, academic achievement, and positive health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> National studies indicate a higher correlation of early prenatal care and higher rates of breastfeeding among mothers with higher educational attainment, as well as lower rates of smoking during pregnancy.<sup>2,3</sup> Additionally, mothers with higher education often have higher earning capacity and opportunity for career advancement, resulting in greater housing security and economic stability.<sup>4</sup>

In 2005, 77 percent of mothers who gave birth had at least a high school degree or equivalent in the states with a revised birth certificate comparable to Kentucky's.<sup>5</sup>

In Kentucky, births to White mothers accounted for 75 percent of all births to mothers without a high school degree.<sup>6</sup> Yet, unequal opportunities in the education system and a lack of community protective factors result in different rates by race: 1 in 4 Black mothers and more than 1 in 2 Hispanic mothers lacked a high school degree or equivalent when they gave birth in 2006, compared to approximately 1 in 5 White mothers.<sup>7</sup>

Rates of births to women without high school degrees vary widely by county, ranging from less than 12 percent in Calloway, Lyon, and Oldham Counties to 40 percent or more of births in Harlan, Hart, Henderson, Lawrence and Martin Counties. Kentucky's rate of births to mothers without a high school degree increased slightly between 2004 and 2006, from 22 to 23 percent. Among counties that followed the worsening state trend, Carter, Henderson, Letcher, Martin, McLean, and Union Counties each had increases greater than 10 percentage points. Carlisle, Carroll, Lyon, and Owsley Counties posted the greatest improvement in rates.

Strategies to increase the education level of parents must begin early by strengthening school readiness, addressing the needs of students who are at the highest risk of dropping out, addressing the reasons why students do not finish high school, and making it harder for students to drop out of school.<sup>8</sup>

Data also show a missed opportunity with older mothers: two out of three births to mothers without at least a high school degree were to women age 20 or older. Kentucky can improve maternal education with GED programs and adult and continuing education programs that meet the scheduling needs of moms, account for child care, and are accessible for families without reliable transportation.<sup>9</sup> Child care centers, schools and community organizations can promote adult and continuing education enrollment to the families they serve by ensuring that outreach efforts and program designs are culturally and linguistically competent to increase the educational attainment of all populations of women.<sup>10</sup>

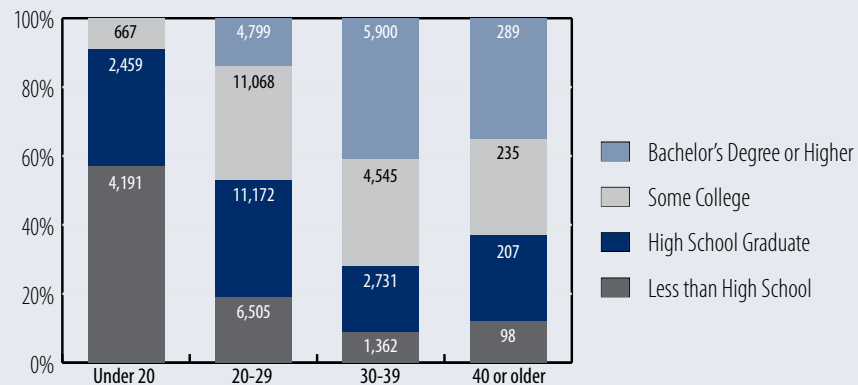
**Data Source:** Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Vital Statistics Branch, processed by Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.

**Data Note:** All data are based on the mother's county of residence. Births to Kentucky residents that occurred in other states are not included, because those states use the old birth certificate. Births to mothers with a GED are counted with those who have completed high school. For cases where the information for this variable was missing, the case was excluded from the total number of live births.

**Rate calculation:** (number of births to women who are not high school graduates in 2004 \* 100) / (total number of live births in 2004)  
(number of births to women who are not high school graduates in 2006 \* 100) / (total number of live births in 2006)

- 1 Child Trends. *Parental Education*. Available at [www.childtrendsdatbank.org](http://www.childtrendsdatbank.org). Accessed August 2008.
- 2 National Center for Health Statistics (2004). *Health, United States, 2004 with Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans*. Available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>. Accessed August 2008.

**Educational Attainment by Mother's Age at Birth of Child, 2006**



**Source:** Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Vital Statistics Branch, processed by Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.

- 3 Child Trends (2007). *Educational Disparities in Smoking Before, During and After Pregnancy*. Paper presented at the SRCD Conference, March 29, 2007. Available at <http://www.childtrends.org>. Accessed August 2008.
- 4 National Center for Children in Poverty (2006). *Parents' Low Education Leads to Low Income, Despite Full-Time Employment*. Available at [www.nccp.org](http://www.nccp.org). Accessed August 2008.
- 5 Martin, J., Hamilton, B., Sutton, P., Ventura, S., Menacker, F., and Kirmeyer, S. (2007). "Births: Final Data for 2005." *National Vital Statistics Reports*, vol. 55, no. 1. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov>. Accessed September 2008.
- 6 Data obtained from Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, September 2008, processed by Kentucky Population Research at the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Shore, R. (2003). *KIDS COUNT Indicator Brief: Reducing the High School Dropout Rate*. Annie E. Casey Foundation. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- 9 Marks, J. (2007). *Building the Foundation for Family Success: Creating Opportunities for Kentucky Families through Child Care Subsidies*. Kentucky Youth Advocates. Available at <http://www.kyyouth.org>. Accessed September 2008.
- 10 Martinez, T., and Wang, T. (2006). *Supporting English Language Acquisition: Opportunities for Foundations to Strengthen the Social and Economic Well-being of Immigrant Families*. The Annie E. Casey Foundation and Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed September 2008.

## Births to mothers who are not high school graduates (number & percent of all live births)

	2004		2006	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Kentucky</b>	<b>11,602</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12,939</b>	<b>23</b>
Adair	45	23	51	24
Allen	56	28	58	23
Anderson	43	18	42	15
Ballard	14	14	12	21
Barren	135	24	132	27
Bath	48	32	46	30
Bell	110	29	110	28
Boone	160	12	189	14
Bourbon	49	20	65	25
Boyd	93	18	176	28
Boyle	59	20	80	23
Bracken	24	20	22	20
Breathitt	45	27	68	31
Breckinridge	63	26	66	28
Bullitt	103	15	136	17
Butler	39	23	41	25
Caldwell	26	21	38	25
Calloway	37	12	41	11
Campbell	161	19	179	20
Carlisle	18	29	10	17
Carroll	58	38	39	28
Carter	52	18	115	31
Casey	74	37	65	36
Christian	261	20	287	21
Clark	108	24	121	25
Clay	114	42	116	38
Clinton	37	29	38	28
Crittenden	29	31	35	30
Cumberland	22	31	21	25
Daviess	230	18	225	16
Edmonson	16	13	15	13
Elliott	29	38	29	32
Estill	69	34	49	27
Fayette	764	20	878	22
Fleming	47	25	51	28
Floyd	181	33	172	30
Franklin	118	19	118	18
Fulton	25	28	24	27
Gallatin	46	32	42	29
Garrard	31	19	40	21

	2004		2006	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Grant	74	21	83	21
Graves	145	31	157	32
Grayson	90	27	73	22
Green	17	14	15	13
Greenup	61	19	77	22
Hancock	20	17	23	24
Hardin	207	14	232	14
Harlan	108	31	172	40
Harrison	57	26	46	19
Hart	88	36	93	41
Henderson	127	29	317	53
Henry	44	22	42	21
Hickman	7	14	11	23
Hopkins	146	25	155	26
Jackson	72	38	58	31
Jefferson	1,830	19	2,130	21
Jessamine	130	22	140	19
Johnson	79	29	92	28
Kenton	357	19	412	21
Knott	65	37	63	32
Knox	209	39	192	37
LaRue	26	18	34	19
Laurel	227	31	222	28
Lawrence	45	30	86	40
Lee	26	34	22	29
Leslie	44	29	41	32
Letcher	81	25	119	36
Lewis	17	22	21	24
Lincoln	100	28	83	24
Livingston	20	23	24	22
Logan	101	27	80	22
Lyon	12	23	7	10
McCracken	141	17	165	20
McCreary	77	30	60	26
McLean	20	17	40	33
Madison	196	20	200	18
Magoffin	69	39	72	36
Marion	53	22	55	21
Marshall	47	14	56	19
Martin	49	34	72	45
Mason	50	26	70	26

	2004		2006	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Meade	34	16	52	20
Menifee	23	31	19	27
Mercer	49	18	49	20
Metcalfe	37	30	36	30
Monroe	43	27	38	28
Montgomery	77	22	101	25
Morgan	39	23	47	30
Muhlenberg	83	22	98	25
Nelson	94	16	74	12
Nicholas	23	22	21	25
Ohio	77	23	81	23
Oldham	61	11	63	11
Owen	21	17	28	21
Owsley	27	40	14	25
Pendleton	38	21	26	17
Perry	139	34	121	30
Pike	179	25	226	29
Powell	57	30	59	30
Pulaski	149	20	178	24
Robertson	6	35	5	28
Rockcastle	51	23	48	26
Rowan	33	16	37	13
Russell	64	30	65	33
Scott	126	20	117	18
Shelby	167	31	191	31
Simpson	46	22	47	22
Spencer	20	10	26	13
Taylor	63	23	53	17
Todd	67	34	61	34
Trigg	19	13	32	22
Trimble	25	27	23	27
Union	25	23	75	36
Warren	271	20	277	19
Washington	28	20	20	14
Wayne	87	32	80	35
Webster	54	30	73	39
Whitley	140	35	126	27
Wolfe	41	34	47	37
Woodford	46	17	51	18