FP-14-12 Grandparenthood in the U.S.: Residence Status of Grandparents

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No recent estimates of the number of grandparents in the United States exist, even though grandparents are an important source of both financial and non-financial support for families (Cherlin & Seltzer, 2014). Most research on grandparents is limited to grandparents who live with grandchildren (resident grandparents), ignoring grandparents who do not co-reside with a grandchild (nonresident grandparents). Using the most recent available national data, this profile is the first* in a National Center for Family & Marriage Research series that documents the prevalence of grandparenthood and compares the sociodemographic composition of grandparents based on coresidence of grandchildren.

In 2009, 64 million adults were grandparents, and a mere 1 in 10 grandparents lived with a grandchild. The vast majority of grandparents do not live with their grandchildren.

*Additional NCFMR resources on grandparents can be found at Resources by Topic -- the Grandparents link. The page includes two additional profiles on grandparents (FP-14-13, FP-14-14) and two other profiles on children's co-residence with grandparents (FP-13-03, FP-12-18) in addition to other data resources.

Age Composition of Grandparents
On average, most grandparents are over age 50, but there is substantial variation in the age of grandparents.

- Resident grandparents tend to be younger than nonresident grandparents.
  - Only one-quarter of resident grandparents are 70 or older, and one-third of nonresident are over age 70.
  - Half of resident grandparents are under age 60, whereas slightly fewer than 40% of nonresident grandparents are below age 60.

Race/Ethnicity of Grandparents
- Resident grandparents more often belong to a minority racial/ethnic group (50%) than their nonresident counterparts (22%).
  - The greatest differential in coresidence is observed among Hispanics. One-quarter (26%) of resident grandparents are Hispanic compared to less than 9% of nonresident grandparents.
Educational Attainment of Grandparents

Lower levels of educational attainment are more common among resident grandparents.

- Twice as many resident compared to nonresident grandparents do not have a high school degree or GED--28% vs. 14%.
- About one-fifth (19%) of nonresident grandparents have a bachelor’s degree compared to only one-tenth (11%) of resident grandparents.

Relationship Status of Grandparents

- Given the age range of grandparents, it is not surprising that a sizeable minority (16%) are widowed, 14% are separated or divorced, 2% are never-married, 3% are cohabiting, and 65% are married (results not shown).
- Figure 4 shows that the relationship status varies according to coresidence with grandchildren. While most grandparents are married or cohabiting, a larger share of nonresident grandparents are currently partnered (69%) compared to resident grandparents (59%).

Reference: