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

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Grandparenthood in the U.S.: Residence Status of Grandparents

Bart Stykes, Wendy D. Manning, & Susan L. Brown

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.

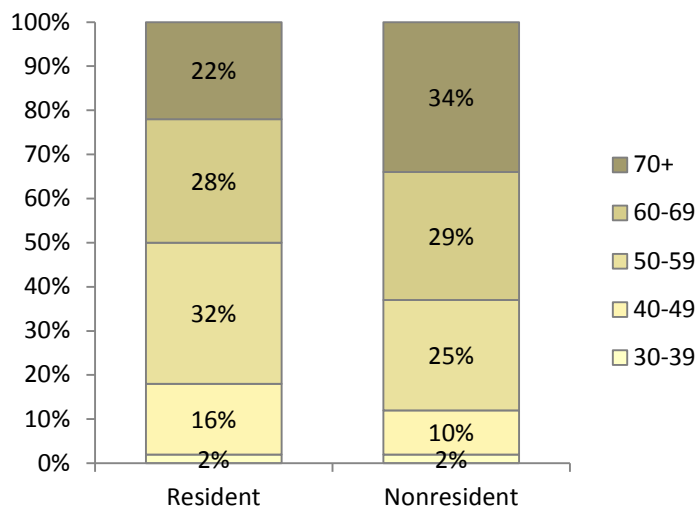
*Additional NCFMR resources on grandparents can be found at [Resources by Topic](#) -- the [Grandparents](#) link. The page includes two additional profiles on grandparents (FP-14-13, FP-14-14) and two other profiles on children's co-residence with grandparents (FP-13-03, FP-12-18) in addition to other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

Age Composition of Grandparents

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

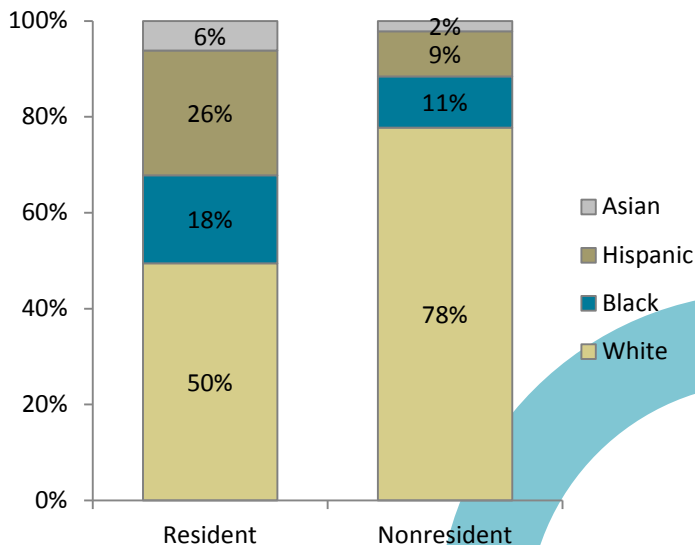
- Resident grandparents tend to be younger than nonresident grandparents.
 - Only one-quarter of resident grandparents are 70 or older, and one-third of nonresident are over age 70.
 - Half of resident grandparents are under age 60, whereas slightly fewer than 40% of nonresident grandparents are below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

Figure 1. Age Composition of Grandparents, by Resident Status



Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 2008 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module.

Figure 2. Race/Ethnicity of Grandparents, by Resident Status



Source: SIPP, 2008 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module

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.

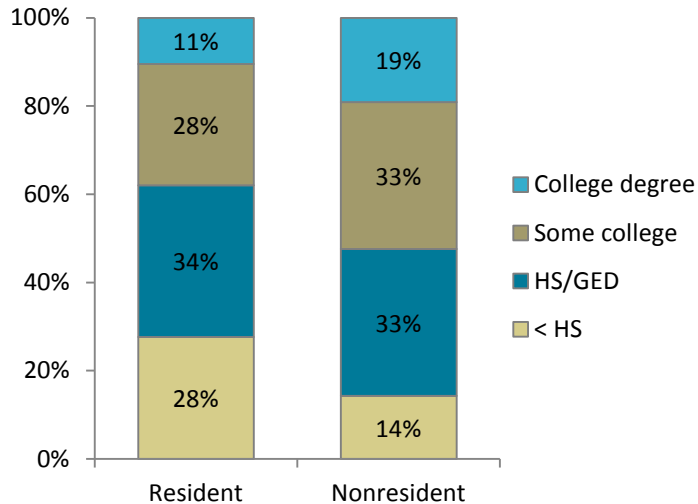
Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

Educational Attainment of Grandparents

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

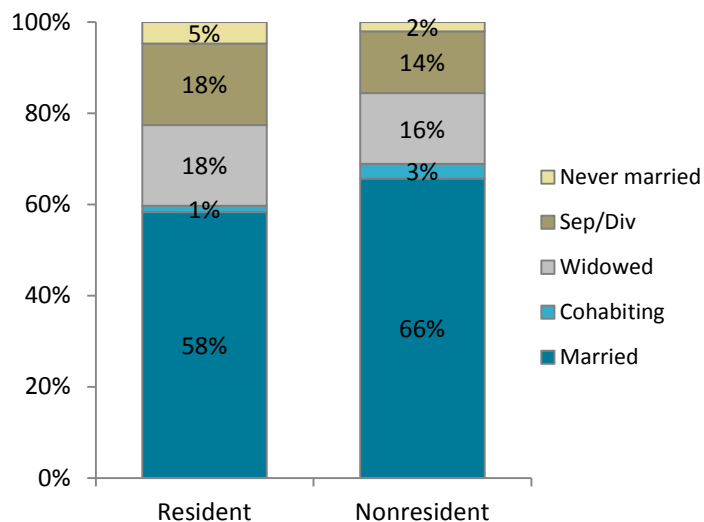
- Twice as many resident compared to nonresident grandparents do not have a high school degree or GED--28% vs. 14%.
- About one-fifth (19%) of nonresident grandparents have a bachelor's degree compared to only one-tenth (11%) of resident grandparents.

Figure 3. Educational Attainment of Grandparents, by Resident Status



Source: SIPP, 2008 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module

Figure 4. Relationship Status of Grandparents, by Resident Status



Source: SIPP, 2008 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module

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:

Cherlin, A. J., & Seltzer, J. A. (2014). Family Complexity, the Family Safety Net, and Public Policy. *The ANNALS of the Academy of Political and Social Science*, 654(1), 231-239, doi:10.1177/0002716214530854

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