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FP-18-04 Grandparents' Characteristics by Age

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Grandparenthood is more common among older adults (aged 65 and older) than those in midlife (aged 40-64). Using data from the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), this profile updates FP-14-13 comparing midlife grandparents to those at older ages across demographic characteristics. The SIPP is a nationally representative household-based survey and is designed to provide comprehensive family and social information on individuals and families. Because the SIPP gather information on all individuals who lived in a household at some point during the survey year, and directly asks respondents if they are a grandparent, it is one of the few surveys that identifies non-resident grandparents. This is the fourth in our series on grandparents in the U.S.

Race/Ethnicity of Grandparents by Age

Midlife grandparents more often belonged to a racial/ethnic minority group than older grandparents. Roughly one-third of midlife grandparents and one-fifth of older grandparents belonged to a racial/ethnic minority group.

- Comparable shares of midlife grandparents were Black or Hispanic (15% and 16%, respectively).
- Only 3% of midlife grandparents were Asian.
- Similarly, a comparable share of older grandparents were Black or Hispanic (8% and 9%, respectively).
- A small proportion of older grandparents were Asian (4%).
- Whites comprise a higher proportion of older grandparents than midlife grandparents (79% and 66%, respectively).

Similar shares of midlife and older grandparents were Asian (4% and 3%), respectively. A small proportion of older grandparents were Black or Hispanic (8% and 16%, respectively).

Education Attainment of Grandparents by Age

The education differences among midlife and older grandparents were fairly modest.

- Nearly one-quarter of older grandparents (23%) had at least a college degree in contrast to less than one-fifth (18%) of midlife grandparents.
- Similarly, midlife grandparents had less than a high school education (17% and 15%, respectively).
- Older grandparents were more likely to have some college (33% versus 29%) and less likely to have a high school diploma (66% versus 76%).
- Whites comprised a smaller share of midlife grandparents (18% versus 29%)

Similarly, a comparable share of older grandparents had a high school education (17% and 15%, respectively). About one-third of adults aged 40 to 64 were grandparents, representing about 34 million adults.

In 2014, 68 million adults aged 40 and over were grandparents—representing just under half (46%) of the total population in that age group.

- Approximately 3 in 4 older adults (aged 65 and older) were grandparents. This represents 34 million grandparents.

Educational Attainment of Grandparents by Age

Relationship Status of Grandparents by Age

- The majorities of midlife and older grandparents were married (61% and 60%, respectively)
- Midlife grandparents were more often divorced or separated (12%) than their older counterparts (17%).
- One-quarter of older grandparents were widowed compared to only 4% of midlife grandparents.
- Fewer grandchildren were cohabiting or never married compared to their relationship status.

Data Source: