FP-18-01 Grandchildren Living in a Grandparent-Headed Household

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Trends in the Proportion of Children Living in a Grandparent’s Household

Over the past few decades, changes in family patterns have increased the diversity of children’s living arrangements, including a gradual increase in children who are living in their grandparent’s households. This profile updates FP-13-03 to examine trends in the proportion of children living in a grandparent-headed household, and whether those children have a parent present in the household (e.g., three-generation households). Focusing on the child’s perspective, this profile also examines the age distribution and poverty status of coresident grandchildren by the presence of a parent in 2015. Data for 1940-2000 are drawn from the Decennial Census, and data from 2010 and 2015 are based on the American Community Survey.

The share of children living in a grandparent’s household remained stable from 1940 to 1950 but declined from 5.8% to 3.2% between 1950 and 1970. Since 1970, the percentage of children living in a grandparent’s household has more than doubled, reaching 8.0% in 2015. One in twelve children lived with a grandparent in 2015.

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Age Distribution of Children Living in a Grandparent’s Household by Presence of Parent

Among those living in a grandparent’s household, children with a parent present were younger than those without a parent present.

- Among coresident grandchildren with a parent present (three-generation) in a grandparent-headed household, over half (57%) were aged 6 or younger. Only 35% were aged 6 or younger among those without a parent present.
- Coresident grandchildren with no parent present (skipped-generation) in a grandparent-headed household were most often aged 7 to 12 (32%)

Economic Disadvantage Among Children Living in a Grandparent’s Household by Presence of Parent

Children living in a three-generation household fare better economically than their counterparts living in skipped-generation households.

- Nearly twice as many children in skipped-generation households were living in poverty (32%) than children in three-generation households (17%).

Suggested Citation: