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## FP-23-02 Grandparents' Characteristics by Age

Krista K. Westrick-Payne  
*Bowling Green State University*, [kristaw@bgsu.edu](mailto:kristaw@bgsu.edu)

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Family Profile No. 02, 2023

## Grandparents' Characteristics by Age

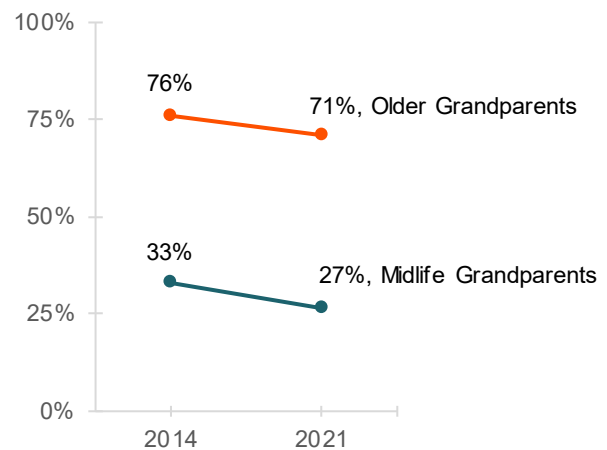
Author: Krista K. Westrick-Payne

The average age of grandparents in the U.S. was 67 years. Grandparenthood is more common among older adults (aged 65 and older) than those in midlife (aged 40-64). In 2021, the percentage of older adults who were grandparents (71%) was more than 2.5 times greater than the percentage among those in midlife (33%). Data from the 2021 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) are used to update [Wu, 2018](#) comparing midlife grandparents to those at older ages across demographic characteristics. The SIPP is a nationally representative household-based survey that directly asks respondents if they are a grandparent, making it one of the few national surveys that identify non-resident grandparents. This profile is number 2 in our 2021 series on grandparents in the U.S.

### Prevalence of Grandparenthood by Age

- Slightly more than one-quarter (26%) of mid-life adults were grandparents, representing nearly 27 million adults. This share is smaller than the share in 2014 when one-third of mid-life adults were grandparents.
- About seven-in-ten older adults (aged 65 and older) were grandparents. This represents 40 million grandparents. Like mid-life adults, the share of older adults who were grandparents is lower in 2021 than in 2014 when 3 in 4 (76%) were grandparents.

Figure 1. Grandparenthood by Age, 2014 & 2021

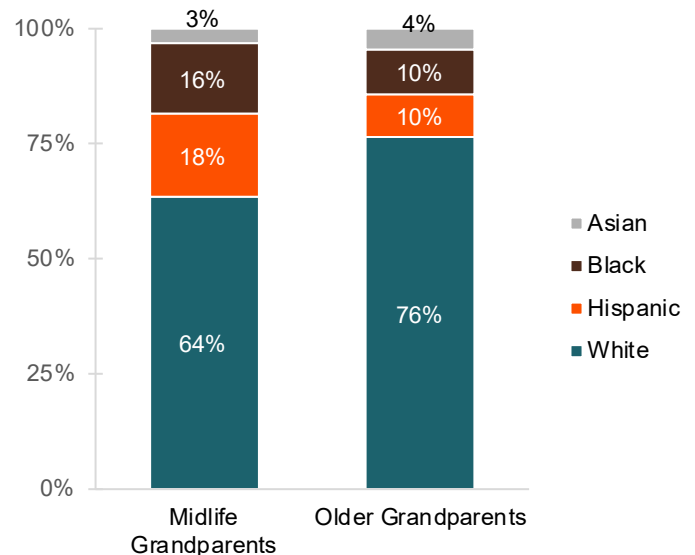


Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 & 2021

### Race/ Ethnicity of Grandparents by Age

- More than one-third (36%) of midlife grandparents and about one-quarter (24%) of older grandparents belonged to a racial/ethnic minority group.
  - Similar shares of midlife grandparents were Black or Hispanic (15% and 18%, respectively). Only 3% of midlife grandparents were Asian.
  - One-in-ten (10%) older grandparents were Black or Hispanic. A small share was Asian (4%).
- Whites composed a higher proportion of older grandparents compared to midlife grandparents (76% and 64%, respectively).

Figure 2. Race/ Ethnicity of Grandparents by Age, 2021

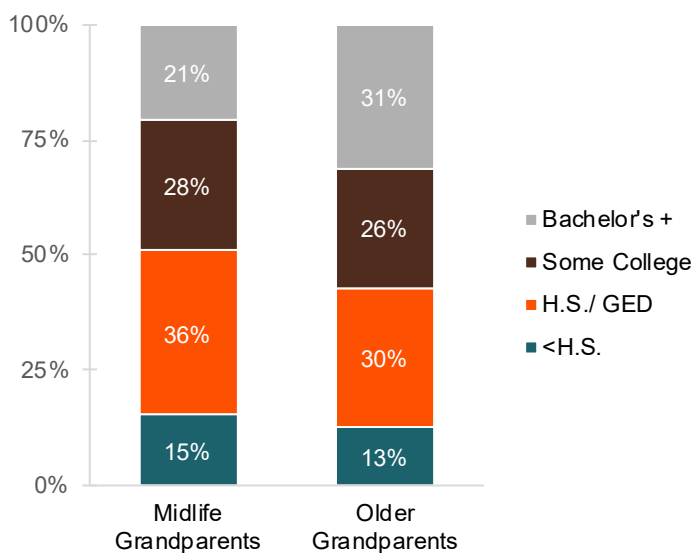


Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2021

### Educational Attainment of Grandparents by Age

- The education differences among midlife and older grandparents were modest.
- Nearly one-third of older grandparents (31%) had at least a college degree in contrast to about one-fifth (21%) of midlife grandparents.
- Similar shares had some college education –28% among midlife grandparents and 26% among older grandparents.
- Slightly more than one-third (36%) of midlife grandparents had a high school level education compared to slightly less than one-third (30%) of older grandparents.
- Similar shares of older grandparents and midlife grandparents had less than a high school education (13% and 15%, respectively).

Figure 3. Educational Attainment of Grandparents by Age, 2021



Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2021

### Data Source:

U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation 2014, Wave 1, and 2021.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sipp.html>

### References:

Wu, H. (2018). Grandparents' characteristics by age. *Family Profiles, FP-18-04*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-18-04>

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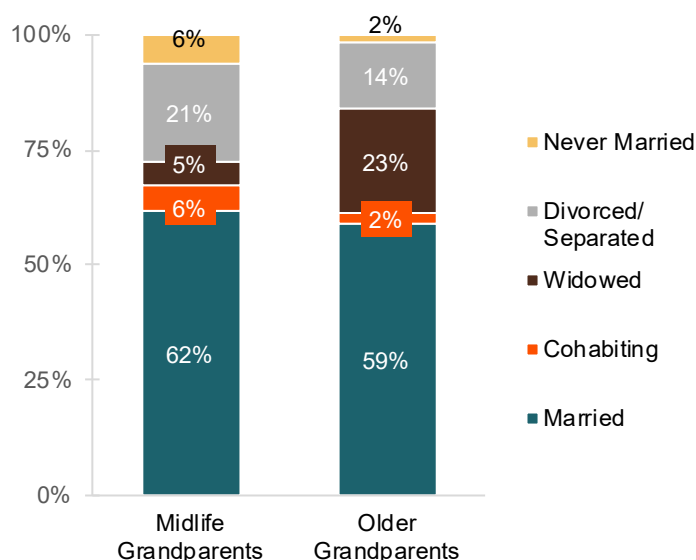
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### Relationship Status of Grandparents by Age

- Midlife grandparents and older grandparents differed in their relationship status.
- Most grandparents were married, with levels at 62% for midlife grandparents and 59% for older grandparents.
- Midlife grandparents were more often divorced or separated (21%) than their older counterparts (14%).
- Only 5% of midlife grandparents were widowed compared to nearly one-quarter (23%) of older grandparents.
- Few grandparents were cohabiting or never married. Midlife grandparents were more often in a cohabiting relationship (6% versus 2%) or never married (6% versus 2%) than older grandparents.

Figure 4. Relationship Status of Grandparents by Age, 2021



Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2021