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FP-23-02 Grandparents’ Characteristics by Age

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Grandparents’ Characteristics by Age

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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.

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).
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).

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 3. Educational Attainment of Grandparents by Age, 2021

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

Figure 4. Relationship Status of Grandparents by Age, 2021

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

Data Source:
https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sipp.html

References:

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