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FP-14-13 Grandparenthood in the U.S.: Grandparents' Characteristics by Life Stage

Bart Stykes

Bowling Green State University, jstykes@bgsu.edu

Wendy D. Manning

Bowling Green State University, wmannin@bgsu.edu

Susan L. Brown

Bowling Green State University, brownsl@bgsu.edu

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Grandparenthood in the U.S.: Grandparents' Characteristics by Life Stage

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



The U.S. is an aging society. As a result, an increasing number of adults are now grandparents (FP-14-12). However, little is known about the composition of grandparents. This profile relies on national data to provide an assessment of the characteristics of midlife and older grandparents. This is the second* profile in the NCFMR series on grandparents in the U.S.

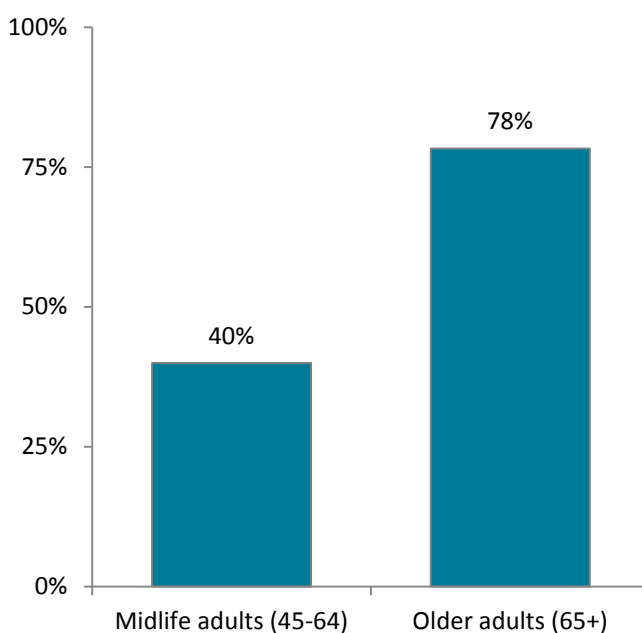
*Additional NCFMR resources on grandparents can be found at [Resources by Topic](#) -- the [Grandparents](#) link. The page includes two additional profiles on grandparents (FP-14-12, FP-14-14) and two other profiles on children's co-residence with grandparents (FP-13-03, FP-12-18) in addition to other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

Prevalence of Grandparenthood

In 1985, approximately 44 million adults aged 30+ were grandparents (Francese, 2009). Recent estimates (FP-14-12) indicate this figure has increased to 64 million. Forty-nine percent of grandparents are midlife, and 46% are older.

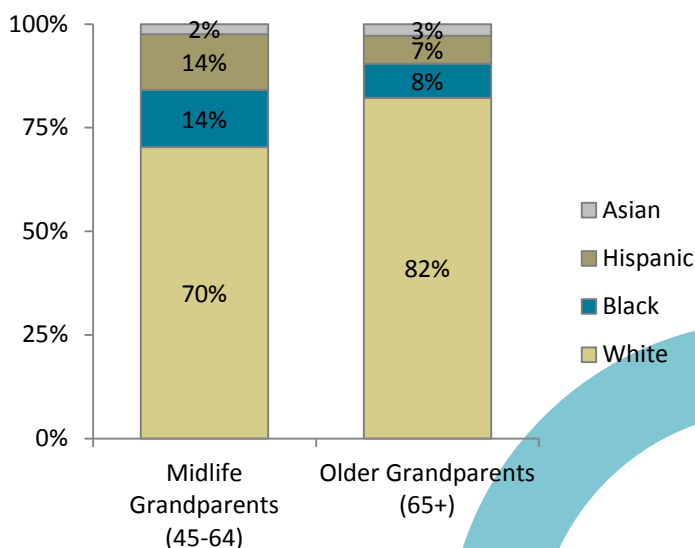
- Figure 1 shows that among midlife adults (aged 45-64), 4 in 10 or 32 million are grandparents.
- Almost 8 in 10 (78%) older adults or 29 million (aged 65+) are grandparents.

Figure 1. Share of Adults Who Is a Grandparent in 2009, by Age



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

Figure 2. Race/Ethnicity of Grandparents in 2009, by Age



Source: SIPP, 2008 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module

Race/Ethnicity of Midlife and Older Grandparents

Overall, larger shares of midlife grandparents belong to minority racial/ethnic groups compared to their older counterparts.

- Seven in 10 midlife grandparents are White, whereas 1 in 7 midlife grandparents is Black or Hispanic, and a mere 2% are Asian.
- Conversely, more than 8 in 10 (82%) older grandparents are White, approximately 1 in 12 older grandparents is Black or Hispanic (7% and 8%, respectively) with 3% being Asian.

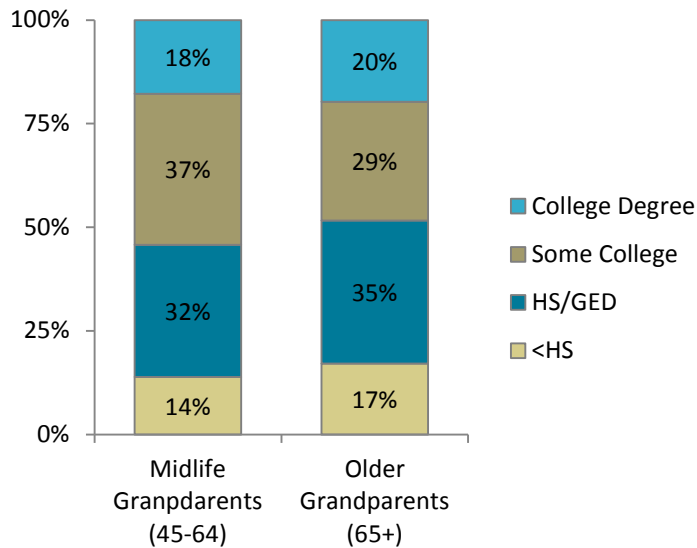
Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

Educational Attainment of Midlife and Older Grandparents

The education levels of midlife and older grandparents are largely comparable.

- Approximately 1 in 5 midlife and older grandparents is college educated (18% and 20%, respectively).
- Almost half of midlife (46%) and older (52%) grandparents do not have any college experience.
- Nearly 2 in 5 (37%) midlife grandparents had some college experience (but no degree) compared to less than 1 in 3 (29%) older grandparents.

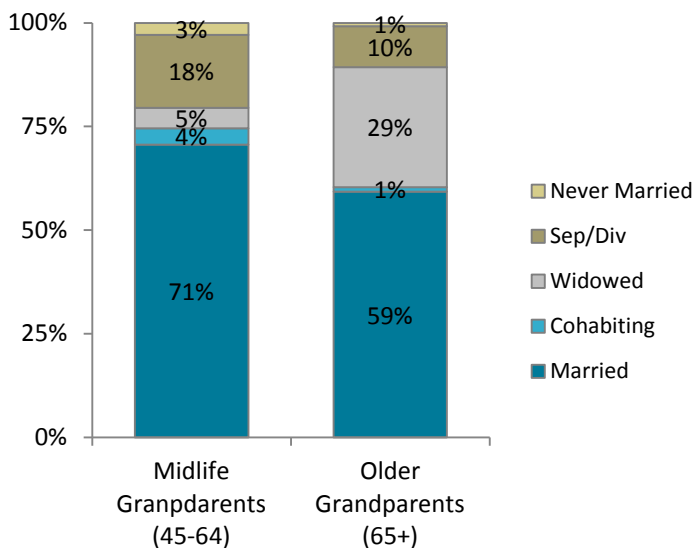
Figure 3. Educational Attainment of Grandparents in 2009, by Age



Source: SIPP, 2008 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module

Relationship Status of Midlife and Older Grandparents

Figure 4. Relationship Status of Grandparents, by Age



Source: SIPP, 2008 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module

Although the majority of grandparents are married regardless of age, considerable variation exists between midlife and older grandparents' relationships statuses.

- Approximately 7 in 10 (71%) midlife grandparents are married compared to 6 in 10 (59%) older grandparents.
- In contrast, 1 in 20 (5%) midlife grandparents is widowed compared to almost 3 in 10 (29%) older grandparents.
- Few grandparents are cohabiting or never married. Midlife grandparents more often are cohabiting (4% versus 1%) or never married (3% versus 1%) compared to older grandparents.

Reference:

Francese, P. (2009). The Grandparent Economy: A Study of the Population, Spending Habits and Economic Impact of Grandparents in the United States. Online resource, <http://assets.grandparents.com/legacy/binary-data/The-Grandparent-Economy-April-2009.pdf>

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