

# Grandparents' Characteristics by Age

Author: Huijing Wu

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 gathers information on all individuals who lived in a surveyed household, 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.

## Prevalence of Grandparenthood by Age

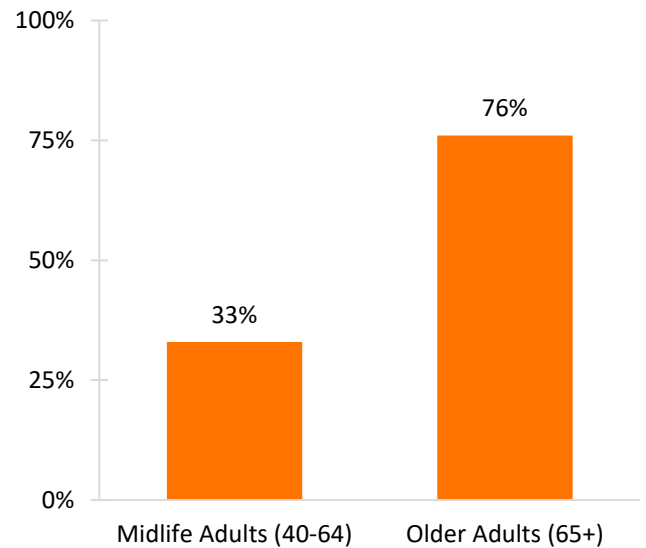
- About one-third of adults aged 40 to 64 were grandparents, representing about 34 million adults.
- Approximately 3 in 4 older adults (aged 65 and older) were grandparents. This represents 34 million grandparents.

---

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

---

Figure 1. Grandparenthood by Age

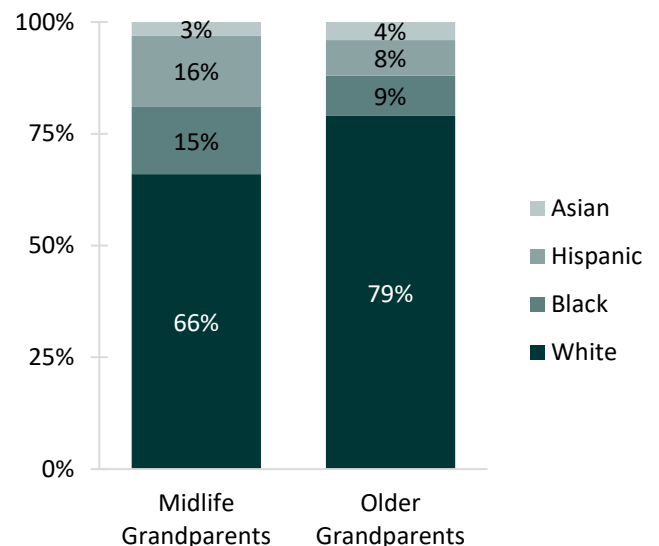


Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014

## 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 compared to midlife grandparents (79% and 66%, respectively).

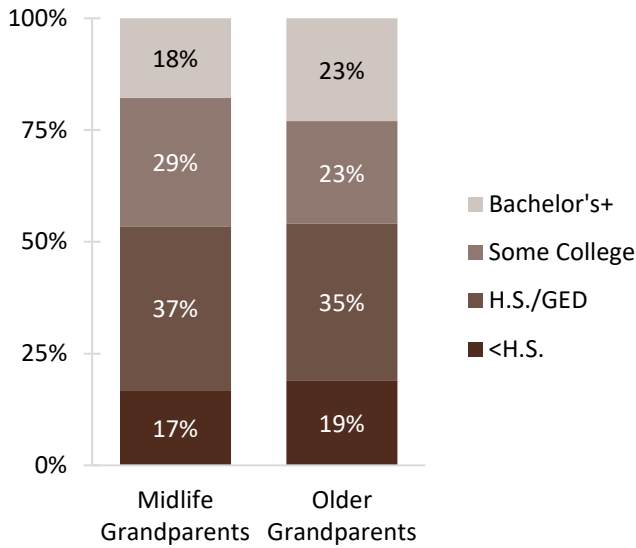
Figure 2. Race/Ethnicity of Grandparents by Age



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

## Educational Attainment of Grandparents by Age

Figure 3. Educational Attainment of Grandparents by Age

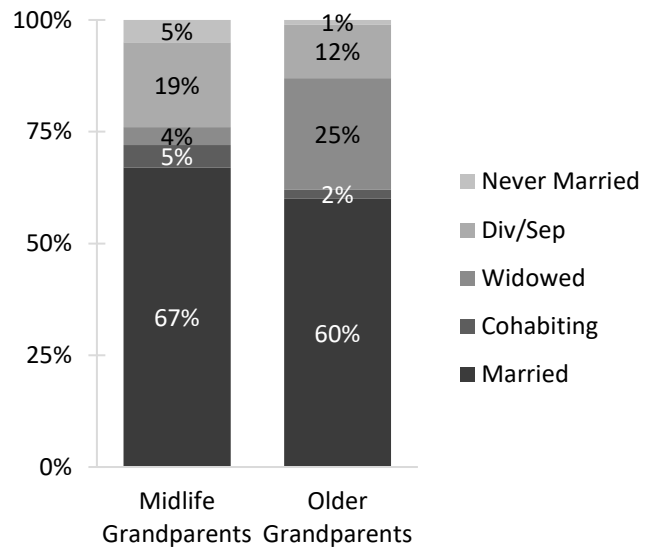


Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014

- The education differences among midlife and older grandparents were 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.
- Similar shares of midlife and older grandparents had less than a high school education (17% and 19%, respectively).

## Relationship Status of Grandparents by Age

Figure 4. Relationship Status of Grandparents by Age



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

- Midlife grandparents and older grandparents differed in their relationship status.
- The majority of grandparents were married, with 67% of midlife grandparents and 60% of older grandparents.
- Midlife grandparents were more often divorced or separated (19%) than their older counterparts (12%).
- One-quarter of older grandparents were widowed compared to only 4% of midlife grandparents.
- Few grandparents were cohabiting or never married. Midlife grandparents were more often in a cohabiting relationship (5% versus 2%) or never married (5% versus 1%) than older grandparents.

### Data Source:

U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 Panel, Wave 1. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sipp/data/2014-panel/wave-1.html>

### References:

Stykes, B., Manning, W. D., Brown, S. L. (2014). Grandparenthood in the U.S.: Grandparents' characteristics by life stage. *Family Profiles*, FP-14-13. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCFMR/documents/FP/FP-14-13-grandparent-lifestage.pdf>

### Suggested Citation:

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>.