Prevalence of Grandparenthood in the U.S.

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In 2021, approximately 63.5 million adults age 50 and older were grandparents, according to the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). 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. In this profile, we identify the prevalence of grandparenthood among adults aged 50 and older and examine their demographic characteristics including race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and current relationship status. This profile is an update of Stykes, Manning, & Brown, 2014 and Wu, 2018. It is also the first in our series on grandparents in the U.S.

- The share of older adults who report having a grandchild has declined in recent years from 58% of those aged 50 and older in 2014 to 53% in 2021.

Race/Ethnicity and Grandparenthood

- Among adults aged 50 and older, a greater percentage of Black older adults were grandparents (56%) than those of other racial/ethnic backgrounds in 2021.
- With only slightly smaller shares, 54% of Hispanic older adults and 53% of White respondents aged 50 and older were also grandparents.
- Those of Asian ethnicity had the smallest share reporting to be a grandparent—only about two-fifths said they had a grandchild.

While the number of grandparents has increased from 62 million in 2018 to 63.5 million in 2021, the share has dropped from 57% to 53% of those aged 50 and older.
Educational Attainment and Grandparenthood
• The prevalence of grandparenthood decreased as educational attainment increased.
• Among those aged 50 or older in 2021 without a high school diploma/ GED, two-thirds were grandparents.
• Sixty-one percent of those with a high school diploma and 54% of those with some college were grandparents in 2021.
• Being a grandparent was least common among older adults who had at least a bachelor’s degree (42%).

Relationship Status and Grandparenthood
• Being a grandparent was most common among widowed adults, at 74%. This is not unexpected because the widowed are more often older.
• Similar shares of married and divorced/ separated adults were grandparents (57% and 54%, respectively).
• Slightly less than half (45%) of cohabiting adults aged 50 and older were grandparents.
• About one in five (18%) of never married older adults reported being a grandparent.

Figure 3. Grandparenthood by Educational Attainment, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Grandparenthood Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;H.S.</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S./ GED</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s +</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Figure 4. Grandparenthood by Relationship Status, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th>Grandparenthood Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/ Separated</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Married</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:


Suggested Citation:

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