Over the past few decades, changes in family patterns have increased the diversity of children’s living arrangements, including a gradual increase in children who are living in their grandparent’s household. This profile updates FP-13-03 to examine trends in the proportion of children living in a grandparent-headed household and whether those children have a parent present in the household (e.g., three-generation household). Focusing on the child’s perspective, this profile also examines the age distribution and poverty status of coresident grandchildren by the presence of a parent in 2015. Data for 1940-2000 are drawn from the Decennial Census, and data from 2010 and 2015 are based on the American Community Survey.

**Trends in the Proportion of Children Living in a Grandparent’s Household**

- The share of children living in a grandparent’s household remained stable from 1940 to 1950 but declined from 5.8% to 3.2% between 1950 and 1970.
- Since 1970, the percentage of children living in a grandparent’s household has more than doubled, reaching 8% in 2015. One in twelve children lived with a grandparent in 2015.

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**Trends in Children Living in a Grandparent’s Household by Presence of Parent**

- The majority (about three-quarters) of children in a grandparent-headed household also lived with their parents (three-generation household).
- Few changes have occurred in the share of children living in a skipped-generation household (no parent present). In 2015, one in four children lived with their grandparent and without a parent.
Age Distribution of Children Living in a Grandparent’s Household by Presence of Parent

Figure 3. Minor Children Living in Grandparent-Headed Households by Presence of Parent and Age Groups, 2015

Among those living in a grandparent’s household, children with a parent present were younger than those with no parent present.

- Among coresident grandchildren with a parent present (three-generation) in the household, over half (57%) were aged 6 or younger. Only 30% were aged 6 or younger among those without a parent present.
- Coresident grandchildren with no parent present (skipped-generation) in a grandparent-headed household were most often aged 7 to 12 (37%).

Economic Disadvantage among Children Living in a Grandparent’s Household by Presence of Parent

Figure 4. Economic Disadvantage among Minor Children Living in Grandparent-Headed Households by Presence of Parent, 2015

Children living in a three-generation household fare better economically than their counterparts living in skipped-generation households.

- Nearly twice as many children in skipped generation households were living in poverty (32%) than children in three-generation households (17%).

Note: Because IPUMS-USA made changes to the coding of variables related to household members’ relationships to the reference person, the number of skipped generation households is different from that presented in FP-13-03.

Data Source:

References:

Suggested Citation:

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