

## Children Living With and Cared For by Grandparents: State-Level Data From the American Community Survey

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October 2012

### Overview

*Increasing numbers of children in the U.S. are living with their grandparents, many of whom are responsible for their grandchildren's care. In fact, the number of children living in a grandparent's household rose from 4.6 million in 2005-07, to 5.2 million in 2008-10. Grandparents may be called upon, often with little preparation, to provide primary care for their grandchildren in the face of family crisis. These circumstances can be stressful, not only for children, but for their grandparents, who often need to make major adjustments (social, psychological, and financial) in their lives to step into a role they had not planned for, and for which they may be poorly prepared.<sup>1</sup> Grandparental care can be rewarding in many ways for both children and their grandparents. Grandparents can bring economic resources, the wisdom of their years, and a sense of continuity and stability that benefit children.<sup>2</sup>*

*This brief examines recent trends, national and for each state, related to children who reside in their grandparents' household, based on data from the American Community Survey.<sup>a</sup>*

Because these living arrangements can have a number of implications for children, it is important to monitor the trends. Additionally, there is interest in the well-being of children in various types of informal (typically unpaid) child care, including kinship care, as well as in the role of grandparents as foster parents to their grandchildren.<sup>3</sup>

Grandparents may need extra supports in interacting with multiple systems (education, health, social welfare, and so on) that families rely on to ensure child well-being. The period of the recent Great Recession, when various forms of residential doubling-up increased in response to economic and housing insecurity, was a time of particular concern for many in the field of family services.<sup>4</sup>

### Trends

In 2005-2007, there were about 4.6 million children younger than 18 in the U.S. who lived in households headed by one or more grandparents, about six percent of all children. Nearly half of these children (47 percent) were younger than six; slightly less than one-third (29 per

cent) were between 6 and 12; and about one-quarter (24 percent) were between 12 and 17. In the case of about 2.5 million of these children, a grandparent was primarily responsible for their basic needs—that is, for food, shelter, clothing, child care, and so on. Of this latter group, more than one-third (or nearly one million children) were in the care of a grandparent without the presence of either of the child's parents.

As of 2008-2010, the number of children residing in a household headed by a grandparent had risen to 5.2 million—about seven percent of all children. The age distribution of these children was slightly younger overall than in 2005-2007. A grandparent had primary responsibility for 2.8 million children (an increase of about 255,000 from the earlier period), and of this group of children about one-third were living with neither parent—a decrease of about 29,000 children.

<sup>a</sup>A companion brief, *Grandparents Living With Children: State-Level Data From the American Community Survey*, focuses on grandparents living with their grandchildren, regardless of who is the householder.

## Variation by state

As of 2008-2010, the percentage of children in households headed by a grandparent ranged from a high of 15 percent in Hawaii to a low of three percent in Minnesota. Other states with relatively high percentages were Mississippi (13 percent), Louisiana (11 percent), and New Mexico (10 percent); additional states with relatively low percentages were Iowa, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Vermont, and Wisconsin (all at four percent).

In 2008-2010, among all children the percentage living in their grandparents' household, where the grandparent

had primary responsibility for their care ranged from a high of nine percent (Mississippi) to a low of two percent (Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Utah, Vermont, and Wisconsin).

Multiple factors likely account for state-level variation, including: cultural traditions associated with race, ethnicity, and country of origin; recent immigration; economic hardship; and housing costs.

<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. (2011). Grandparents raising grandchildren. Facts for Families, No. 7. Retrieved from [http://www.aacap.org/galleries/FactsForFamilies/77\\_grandparents\\_raising\\_grandchildren.pdf](http://www.aacap.org/galleries/FactsForFamilies/77_grandparents_raising_grandchildren.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Denham, T. E. & Smith, C. W. (1989). The influence of grandparents on grandchildren: A review of the literature and resources. *Family Relations*, 38, 345-350.

<sup>3</sup> Administration for Children and Families. (2007). Kinship caregivers in the child welfare system. National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being. Research Brief No. 15. Retrieved from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/rb\\_15\\_2col.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/rb_15_2col.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> McCoy-Roth, M., Mackintosh, B. B., & Murphey, D. (2012). Retrieved from [http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child\\_Trends-2012\\_02\\_16\\_ECH\\_Homelessness.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2012_02_16_ECH_Homelessness.pdf)

## ABOUT THE DATA USED IN THIS BRIEF

The American Community Survey (ACS) is the U.S. Census Bureau's continuous sampling instrument for collecting much of the data that previously appeared on the "long form" of the decennial census. However, the ACS also includes questions in the areas of housing, family structure, income, transportation, and more, which expand what was previously available. Equally important, the ACS methodology allows for yearly estimates at both national and state levels, and for most large cities, and for multi-year-interval estimates for smaller geographic areas.

We examined data from the ACS, which uses a continuous-sampling methodology to collect information from households on a number of demographic, social, economic, and housing indicators. We used the ACS three-year estimates for two periods: 2005-2007, and 2008-2010. Single-year data are also available for these years, but, particularly for smaller states, margins of error for these estimates are considerably larger when using data for single years.

For this Brief, the data universe was children younger than 18 living with a grandparent householder.

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Child Trends

	2005-2007				2008-2010			
	Children Living with Grandparent Householder		Children Whose Grandparents Have Primary Responsibility for Care*		Children Living with Grandparent Householder		Children Whose Grandparents Have Primary Responsibility for Care*	
	Number of Children	% of all children	Number of Children	% of all children	Number of Children	% of all children	Number of Children	% of all children
<b>United States</b>	<b>4,651,000</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2,548,000</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>5,188,000</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>2,803,000</b>	<b>3.8</b>
Alabama	105,000	9.4	67,000	6.0	107,000	9.4	69,000	6.1
Alaska	10,000	5.7	6,000	3.5	11,000	6.1	6,000	3.3
Arizona	114,000	7.0	66,000	4.1	129,000	7.9	73,000	4.5
Arkansas	58,000	8.3	40,000	5.8	61,000	8.6	42,000	5.9
California	619,000	6.6	274,000	2.9	703,000	7.6	301,000	3.2
Colorado	54,000	4.6	31,000	2.7	64,000	5.3	37,000	3.0
Connecticut	33,000	4.0	17,000	2.0	45,000	5.5	23,000	2.8
Delaware	13,000	6.3	7,000	3.5	16,000	7.9	9,000	4.4
Florida	280,000	7.0	159,000	4.0	304,000	7.6	167,000	4.2
Georgia	181,000	7.3	108,000	4.4	208,000	8.4	129,000	5.2
Hawaii	39,000	13.7	13,000	4.7	45,000	14.8	12,000	4.0
Idaho	15,000	3.8	9,000	2.3	20,000	4.8	12,000	2.9
Illinois	199,000	6.2	111,000	3.5	204,000	6.5	107,000	3.4
Indiana	85,000	5.4	49,000	3.1	101,000	6.3	61,000	3.8
Iowa	24,000	3.4	13,000	1.9	28,000	3.9	16,000	2.2
Kansas	31,000	4.5	18,000	2.5	35,000	4.9	20,000	2.7
Kentucky	67,000	6.7	43,000	4.2	80,000	7.8	54,000	5.3
Louisiana	111,000	10.1	70,000	6.4	122,000	10.9	78,000	7.0
Maine	10,000	3.5	5,000	1.8	14,000	5.0	7,000	2.4
Maryland	93,000	6.8	47,000	3.4	103,000	7.6	51,000	3.8
Massachusetts	62,000	4.3	27,000	1.9	69,000	4.8	29,000	2.0
Michigan	124,000	5.0	68,000	2.7	140,000	5.9	72,000	3.0
Minnesota	37,000	3.0	20,000	1.6	43,000	3.4	21,000	1.7
Mississippi	88,000	11.5	57,000	7.4	97,000	12.8	64,000	8.5
Missouri	83,000	5.8	46,000	3.3	89,000	6.3	51,000	3.6
Montana	11,000	4.9	6,000	2.9	13,000	5.8	8,000	3.5
Nebraska	15,000	3.5	9,000	2.0	19,000	4.1	10,000	2.2
Nevada	38,000	6.0	22,000	3.4	46,000	6.9	26,000	3.9
New Hampshire	11,000	3.8	5,000	1.8	13,000	4.4	6,000	2.0
New Jersey	108,000	5.2	52,000	2.5	113,000	5.5	50,000	2.4
New Mexico	45,000	9.0	28,000	5.7	51,000	10.0	32,000	6.1
New York	279,000	6.2	126,000	2.8	286,000	6.6	131,000	3.0
North Carolina	144,000	6.7	85,000	3.9	163,000	7.2	103,000	4.6
North Dakota	5,000	3.3	3,000	2.1	5,000	3.5	3,000	2.2
Ohio	154,000	5.6	88,000	3.2	165,000	6.0	96,000	3.5
Oklahoma	65,000	7.3	43,000	4.9	71,000	7.7	46,000	5.0
Oregon	39,000	4.5	23,000	2.7	46,000	5.4	25,000	2.9
Pennsylvania	157,000	5.6	80,000	2.9	170,000	6.1	85,000	3.0
Rhode Island	11,000	4.7	4,000	1.7	12,000	5.2	5,000	2.0
South Carolina	92,000	8.8	57,000	5.5	101,000	9.4	59,000	5.5
South Dakota	9,000	4.6	7,000	3.4	12,000	5.8	8,000	3.8
Tennessee	111,000	7.6	69,000	4.7	129,000	8.6	78,000	5.2
Texas	510,000	7.9	296,000	4.6	570,000	8.4	332,000	4.9
Utah	35,000	4.4	17,000	2.2	46,000	5.3	19,000	2.2
Vermont	5,000	3.4	2,000	1.4	5,000	4.0	3,000	2.1
Virginia	109,000	6.0	61,000	3.3	124,000	6.7	66,000	3.6
Washington	65,000	4.3	35,000	2.3	78,000	5.0	41,000	2.6
West Virginia	29,000	7.4	18,000	4.7	35,000	9.0	21,000	5.4
Wisconsin	46,000	3.5	25,000	1.9	57,000	4.2	30,000	2.2
Wyoming	8,000	6.4	4,000	3.4	9,000	6.5	6,000	4.2

\*"Primary responsibility" means the grandparent is financially responsible for the majority of the basic needs for one or more grandchildren living in the household.

Note: Count estimates are rounded to the nearest thousand. Children include ages birth through 17. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.