

Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren

DEFINITION

Grandparents caring for grandchildren is the percentage of family households in which a grandparent is financially responsible for food, shelter, clothing, child care, etc. for any or all grandchildren under age 18 living in the household.

SIGNIFICANCE

One in ten children in the United States lives with a grandparent. The number of children living with grandparents increased slowly over the last decade, rising sharply at the start of the recession. Black children are more likely to be cared for primarily by a grandparent than White, Hispanic, or Asian children.¹

Grandparents can provide continuity and family support for children in vulnerable families. Children may be in grandparent care because they have a parent who is unemployed, incarcerated, ill, struggling with substance abuse, or coping with other problems.²

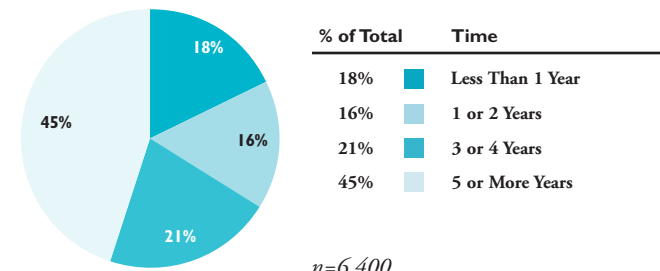
Grandparents who are financially responsible for their grandchildren have higher rates of poverty compared to other adults. Twenty-two percent of grandparent caregivers live below the poverty line, compared to 10% of the population age 50 and over.^{3,4}

Many grandparents and other relative caregivers have informal custody arrangements and are not involved with child welfare agencies, which means that they receive less monitoring and support. Relative caregivers are more likely to have lower incomes and have more children in the home than traditional foster parents.⁵

Grandparents and other relative caregivers often are isolated and lack information about the support services, resources, programs, benefits, laws, and policies available to them.⁶ Nearly all children in the care of relatives are eligible for cash assistance through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) regardless of their household's income level, yet children in informal custody arrangements are much less likely to receive these payments.⁷

Grandparent caregivers are at risk for poor physical and mental health. They may have difficulty enrolling children in school and/or seeking health insurance or medical care for the children. Many caregivers do not pursue the legal process required for permanent status such as adoption or guardianship in order to avoid strain on family relationships.^{8,9} Grandparents make up the largest percentage of relative caregivers, but other relative caregivers (including aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings) may face similar obstacles.^{10,11}

Rhode Island Grandparents Financially Responsible for Their Grandchildren, by Length of Time Responsible, 2010-2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2012. Table B10050.

- ◆ Between 2010 and 2012, there were a total of 13,511 children in Rhode Island living in households headed by grandparents.¹² During this time period, there were 6,400 grandparents who were financially responsible for their grandchildren, two-thirds (66%) of whom had been financially responsible for three or more years.¹³
- ◆ In 2010, 6% (13,968) of all children in Rhode Island lived with a grandparent caregiver and 2% (4,398) lived with other relatives.¹⁴
- ◆ Children in informal kinship care (i.e., placed with relatives without the involvement of a child welfare agency) are more likely to live in poverty than children living with their parents. Nationally, over one-third (38%) of children in public and private kinship care live in poverty and only 42% of eligible children in kinship care receive Medicaid coverage.¹⁵
- ◆ Rhode Island regulations state that the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) must give priority to relatives when placing a child in out-of-home care.¹⁶ On December 31, 2013, there were 626 children in DCYF care who were in out-of-home placements with a grandparent or other relative. These children made up 32% of all children in out-of-home placements in Rhode Island.¹⁷
- ◆ The federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act*, which became law in 2008, helps children and youth in foster care establish permanent families through subsidized guardianship and adoption. Rhode Island was the first state to be granted approval for the new kinship-guardianship assistance program to enable children in the care of grandparents and other relatives to exit foster care into permanency.^{18,19}

Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren

Table 3.

Children's Living Arrangements, Rhode Island, 2010

CITY/TOWN	CHILDREN LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS	CHILDREN WHO ARE A HOUSEHOLDER OR SPOUSE		CHILDREN LIVING WITH NON-RELATIVES		CHILDREN LIVING WITH OTHER RELATIVES		CHILDREN LIVING IN MARRIED COUPLE FAMILIES		CHILDREN LIVING IN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES		CHILDREN LIVING WITH GRANDPARENTS	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Barrington	4,597	2	<1%	31	1%	15	0%	3,871	84%	593	13%	85	2%
Bristol	3,621	1	<1%	37	1%	51	1%	2,564	71%	743	21%	225	6%
Burrillville	3,548	0	0%	110	3%	26	1%	2,353	66%	827	23%	232	7%
Central Falls	5,634	3	<1%	90	2%	209	4%	2,159	38%	2,744	49%	429	8%
Charlestown	1,506	0	0%	15	1%	20	1%	1,059	70%	306	20%	106	7%
Coventry	7,762	2	<1%	148	2%	72	1%	5,343	69%	1,648	21%	549	7%
Cranston	16,262	5	<1%	226	1%	324	2%	10,462	64%	4,218	26%	1,027	6%
Cumberland	7,535	0	0%	97	1%	53	1%	5,651	75%	1,400	19%	334	4%
East Greenwich	3,436	0	0%	21	1%	13	0%	2,889	84%	442	13%	71	2%
East Providence	9,100	2	<1%	127	1%	154	2%	5,329	59%	2,813	31%	675	7%
Exeter	1,300	0	0%	23	2%	16	1%	996	77%	183	14%	82	6%
Foster	986	0	0%	24	2%	10	1%	741	75%	142	14%	69	7%
Glocester	2,098	0	0%	39	2%	26	1%	1,581	75%	315	15%	137	7%
Hopkinton	1,845	0	0%	46	2%	24	1%	1,327	72%	335	18%	113	6%
Jamestown	1,043	0	0%	3	0%	5	0%	799	77%	187	18%	49	5%
Johnston	5,473	2	<1%	90	2%	114	2%	3,591	66%	1,296	24%	380	7%
Lincoln	4,743	3	<1%	61	1%	52	1%	3,270	69%	1,146	24%	211	4%
Little Compton	654	0	0%	5	1%	1	0%	528	81%	78	12%	42	6%
Middletown	3,634	3	<1%	45	1%	38	1%	2,606	72%	776	21%	166	5%
Narragansett	2,240	2	<1%	35	2%	25	1%	1,533	68%	540	24%	105	5%
New Shoreham	163	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%	111	68%	46	28%	4	2%
Newport	4,060	2	<1%	66	2%	56	1%	2,034	50%	1,698	42%	204	5%
North Kingstown	6,322	1	<1%	57	1%	49	1%	4,639	73%	1,329	21%	247	4%
North Providence	5,481	0	0%	81	1%	131	2%	3,266	60%	1,625	30%	378	7%
North Smithfield	2,456	0	0%	40	2%	13	1%	1,831	75%	476	19%	96	4%
Pawtucket	16,550	17	<1%	239	1%	460	3%	7,488	45%	7,118	43%	1,228	7%
Portsmouth	3,940	2	<1%	47	1%	24	1%	2,977	76%	718	18%	172	4%
Providence	41,497	41	<1%	632	2%	1,663	4%	16,931	41%	19,136	46%	3,094	7%
Richmond	1,836	0	0%	32	2%	16	1%	1,437	78%	247	13%	104	6%
Scituate	2,272	0	0%	24	1%	22	1%	1,731	76%	356	16%	139	6%
Smithfield	3,615	2	<1%	46	1%	29	1%	2,802	78%	572	16%	164	5%
South Kingstown	5,364	0	0%	81	2%	31	1%	3,951	74%	1,053	20%	248	5%
Tiverton	2,998	1	<1%	41	1%	20	1%	2,109	70%	665	22%	162	5%
Warren	1,935	4	<1%	42	2%	19	1%	1,124	58%	610	32%	136	7%
Warwick	15,795	3	<1%	308	2%	223	1%	10,476	66%	3,676	23%	1,109	7%
West Greenwich	1,468	2	<1%	22	1%	13	1%	1,131	77%	221	15%	79	5%
West Warwick	5,746	1	<1%	151	3%	121	2%	3,118	54%	1,990	35%	365	6%
Westerly	4,787	4	<1%	82	2%	83	2%	3,012	63%	1,337	28%	269	6%
Woonsocket	9,842	10	<1%	203	2%	176	2%	4,237	43%	4,533	46%	683	7%
Four Core Cities	73,523	71	<1%	1,164	2%	2,508	3%	30,815	42%	33,531	46%	5,434	7%
Remainder of State	149,621	44	<1%	2,304	2%	1,890	1%	102,242	68%	34,607	23%	8,534	6%
Rhode Island	223,144	115	<1%	3,468	2%	4,398	2%	133,057	60%	68,138	31%	13,968	6%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.

The denominator is the number of children under age 18 living in family households according to Census 2010. A family household is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as consisting of a householder and one or more people living together in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption – it also may include others not related to the householder.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

References

- ¹⁴ Livingston, G. (2013). *At grandmother's house we stay: One-in-ten children are living with a grandparent*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- ²³ Murphey, D., Cooper, M. & Moore, K. A. (2012). *Grandparents living with children: State-level data from the American Community Survey*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- ⁵ Hinterlong, J. & Ryan, S. (2008). Creating grander families: Older adults adopting younger kin and nonkin. *The Gerontologist*, 48(4), 527-536.
- ⁶ American Association of Retired Persons. (n.d.). *About Grandfacts*. Retrieved January 10, 2014, from www.aarp.org
- ^{7,8,15} KIDS COUNT. (2012). *Stepping up for kids: What government and communities should do to support kinship families*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ^{9,18} Generations United. (2011). *Grandfamilies: Challenges of caring for the second family*. Washington, DC: Generations United.
- ^{10,12} U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2012. Table B09018.
- ¹¹ Vandivere, S., Yrausquin, A., Allen, T., Malm, K., & McKlindon, A. (2012). *Children in nonparental care: A review of the literature and analysis of data gaps*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

(continued on page 168)

Methodology & References

Family Income Levels Based on the Federal Poverty Measures

The poverty thresholds are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the Census Bureau. The thresholds are used mainly for statistical purposes — for instance, estimating the number of children in Rhode Island living in poor families. The poverty threshold is adjusted upward based on family size and whether or not household members are children, adults, or 65 years and over. The 2013 federal poverty threshold for a family of three with two children is \$18,769 and \$23,624 for a family of four with two children.

The poverty guidelines are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for administrative purposes such as determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. Often, government assistance programs, including many of those administered by Rhode Island, use the federal poverty guidelines to determine income eligibility for public programs. The figures are adjusted upward for larger family sizes.

The phrases "Federal Poverty Level" and "Federal Poverty Line" (often abbreviated FPL) are used interchangeably and can refer to either the poverty thresholds or the poverty guidelines.

Family Income Levels Based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines

2014 FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES	ANNUAL INCOME FAMILY OF THREE	ANNUAL INCOME FAMILY OF FOUR
50%	\$9,895	\$11,925
100%	\$19,790	\$23,850
130%	\$25,727	\$31,005
175%	\$34,633	\$41,738
180%	\$35,622	\$42,930
185%	\$36,612	\$44,123
200%	\$39,580	\$47,700
225%	\$44,528	\$53,663
250%	\$49,475	\$59,625

(continued from page 11)

References for Children in Single Parent Families

- ¹³ *Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study: Fact sheet.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 31, 2012, from www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu
- ¹⁴ Child Trends Data Bank. (2013). *Births to unmarried women.* Retrieved December 13, 2013, from www.childtrendsdatabank.org

(continued from page 13)

References for Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren

- ¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2012. Table B10050.
- ¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010.
- ¹⁶ Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. (2009). *Kinship care. (Policy 900.0025).* Retrieved January 3, 2014, from www.dcyf.ri.gov
- ¹⁷ Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST), December 31, 2013.
- ¹⁹ Child Welfare League of America. (2009). Rhode Island approved for kinship guardianship option, more pending. *Children's Monitor Online: A public policy update from CWLA*, 22(29).

(continued from page 15)

References for Mother's Education Level

- ⁹ National Center for Children in Poverty. (2013). *Basic facts about low-income children: Children under 18 years, 2011.* Retrieved January 22, 2014, from www.nccp.org
- ¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2012. Table B20004.
- ^{11,13} Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Hospital Discharge Database, 2008-2012. Data for 2012 are provisional.
- ¹² Livingston, G. & Cohn, D. (2013). *Long-term trend accelerates since recession: Record share of new mothers are college educated.* Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- ¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2012. Table S1702.

(continued from page 17)

References for Racial and Ethnic Diversity

- ¹⁵ The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2012). *Children in immigrant families in which resident parents have been in the country five years or less - 2011.* Retrieved December 26, 2013, from www.datacenter.kidscount.org
- ¹⁶ The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2013). *Children living below the poverty threshold by children in immigrant families - 2012.* Retrieved December 26, 2013, from www.datacenter.kidscount.org
- ¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, 2009-2011. Table B05010.
- ¹⁸ Skinner, C., Wight, V. R., Aratani, Y., Cooper, J. L., & Thampi, K. (2010). *English language proficiency, family economic security, and child development.* New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- ¹⁹ The Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2012). *Children living in linguistically isolated households by children in immigrant families - 2011.* Retrieved December 26, 2013, from www.datacenter.kidscount.org

(continued from page 21)

References for Racial and Ethnic Disparities

- ^{28,29,48,49} Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, Maternal and Child Health Database, 2014.
- ³⁰ Rhode Island Department of Health, Hospital Discharge Database, 2014.
- ³¹ Bloom, B., Jones, L. & Freeman, G. (2013). Summary health statistics for U.S. children: National Health Interview Survey, 2012. *Vital and Health Statistics, 10(258)*. Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ³² Flores, G. (2009). *Achieving optimal health and healthcare for all children: How we can eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in children's health and healthcare.* Washington, DC: First Focus.
- ³³ Mendel, R. A. (2011). *No place for kids: The case for reducing juvenile incarceration.* Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.