

GrandFacts: Data, Interpretation, and Implications for Caregivers

Introduction

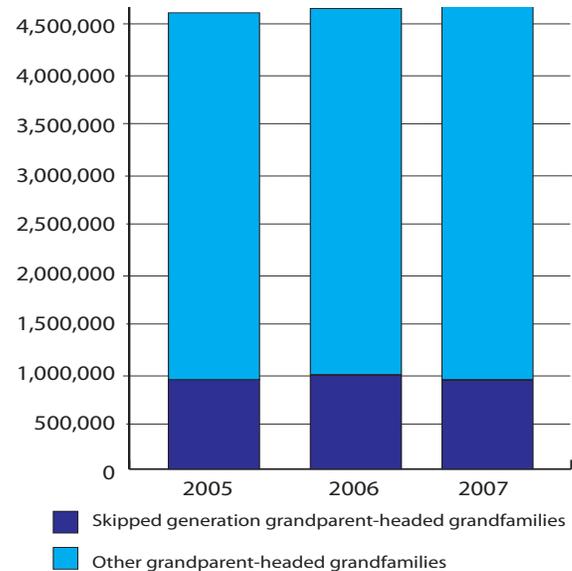
Skipped generation grandfamilies – families headed by grandparents in which no parents of the grandchildren are present in the home – are a type of grandfamily about which little is known. Because of the absence of any parents in the household, the challenges faced by these families are thought to be significant. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's latest national sample, the American Community Survey 2005-2007 (ACS) three year estimates, we now know that compared to parent-headed households, skipped generation grandfamilies have greater challenges in many areas.

This fact sheet summarizes some of the key findings in Generations United's (GU's) report of the same name. For a copy of that report, which you can download free of charge, go to the GU website at www.gu.org/GrandFacts.asp. That same link on GU's website contains additional tables using ACS data, contrasting parent-child families with different types of grandfamilies for the United States, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. You can also compile your own jurisdiction specific ACS data and take it to policymakers, programmers, and funders to make the case for more supports for these families. Visit www.gu.org/Defin8191322.asp for a Power Point presentation that explains the steps in accessing this data from the www.census.gov website.



Photo: Linda LeGendre

Children in Skipped Generation Grandfamilies



Source: : U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 to 2007 American Community Survey custom tabulation

How many skipped generation grandfamilies are there?

There are about 640,000 skipped generation grandfamilies in the United States, all with one or more children under 18. Between 2005 and 2007, the number of children in these grandfamilies has remained constant at about 1 million.

What are some key findings about skipped generation grandfamilies?

- Many of the children are teenagers – 42 percent are ages 12 to 17. In parent-child families one-third of the children are in each age group – 12 to 17, 6 to 11, and under 6 years.
- Approximately 1 out of every 7 children ages 5 to 17 has a disability compared to one of out of 16 children in parent headed households. Many others have physical and mental health needs.
- One-third of the children are in a family with an income below the poverty level. This is double the child poverty rate in parent-child families.

- Nearly half are facing a housing cost burden, which includes home owners as well as renters. This is significantly more than with parent-child families.
- Nearly one-third of grandparent householders have not completed high school. This compares to one-eighth of parents in parent-child families who have less than a high school diploma.



Photo: Donald Moyer

What are the implications of this data?

These key findings have direct implications for research, policy, and practice. They can be used to make the case to grantmakers, programmers, and policymakers about the need for services for grandfamilies. The existing ACS data can also be used as a springboard to conduct further research about these families. Although the Census Bureau collects critical information about grandfamilies, there are many questions they do not ask. Data that would be extremely useful in making the case for additional supports for all grandfamilies, including skipped generation ones, include:

- The percentages of grandfamilies formed due to each major causal factor, e.g., parental substance abuse, mental illness, military deployment, death, incarceration, poverty, and teenage pregnancy.
- The number of caregivers who fall into poverty as a result of raising children.
- The religious affiliation of these families.
- More characteristics about the grandchildren of the householder, and other children living in skipped generation grandfamilies, including children who are unrelated to the householder, also called “fictive kin”.

Conclusion

At the national level, GU, other national organizations, and people like you are working to inform policymakers and grantmakers of these national-level ACS findings as well as findings from individual Congressional districts. To make the case for more grandfamilies’ support, we use this data coupled with compelling personal stories that give the data a “face”. By helping policymakers, programmers, and funders visualize and recognize that they also know some of these families – that they exist throughout the country in every socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic group – you can help improve support for grandfamilies. If you have any questions concerning the content of this fact sheet or its accompanying report, please contact us at gu@gu.org or (202) 289-3979.

**Please note that we do not include “other” relatives, such as aunts, uncles, and siblings, in our definition of skipped generation grandfamilies, because we have very limited data about them, but anecdotally we know that these “other relatives” face similar issues to grandparents.*

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Because we're stronger together®

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on

improving the lives of children,

youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans. Since 1986, GU has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children, and youth organizations providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

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The GU web site at www.gu.org contains additional information about grandparents and other relatives raising children.

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