

# Grandparents: Raising their children's children, they get the job done

November 2 2018

**Table 1. Comparison of Grandparent Households (n=1250) and Parent Households (n=44,807) (NSCH, 2016)**

Grandparent Households n (%)	Parent Households* n (%) (reference)
<b>Questions/Variables of Interest from NSCH 2016 – Child Health and Behavior</b>	
<b>Does this child currently have Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, that is, ADD or ADHD? (3-17 years)</b>	
Yes	214 (16.6)
No	885 (83.4)
<b>This child becomes angry or anxious when going from one activity to another. (3-5 years)</b>	
All of the time, most of the time, or some of the time	114 (73.1)
None of the time	61 (26.9)
<b>This child can calm down when excited or all wound up. (3-5)</b>	
All of the time or most of the time	123 (68.2)
Some of the time or none of the time	52 (31.8)
<b>This child loses control of his or her temper when things do not go his or her way. (3-5 years)</b>	
All of the time or most of the time	32 (25.6)
Some of the time	120 (64.3)
None of the time	21 (10.1)
<b>Compared to other children his or her age, how often is this child able to sit still? (3-5 years)</b>	
All of the time	23 (12.4)
Most of the time	76 (37.6)
Some of the time or none of the time	75 (50.1)
<b>This child argues too much. (6-17)</b>	
Definitely true	99 (6.3)
Somewhat true	314 (39.2)
Not true	492 (54.5)
<b>Questions/Variables of Interest from NSCH 2016 – Respondent Health, Coping, Support, and Interaction with Child</b>	
<b>Self-rated physical and mental health status</b>	
Excellent or very good physical health	654 (45.2)
Less than very good physical health	584 (54.8)
Excellent or very good mental health	923 (66.9)
Less than very good mental health	316 (33.1)
<b>How well can you and this child share ideas or talk about things that really matter?</b>	
Very well	569 (70.6)
Somewhat well	281 (24.0)
Not very well not at all	58 (5.4)
<b>How well do you think you are handling the day-to-day demands or raising children?</b>	
Very well	791 (63.9)
Somewhat well	423 (34.5)
Not very well not at all	24 (1.5)
<b>Was there someone that you could turn to for day-to-day emotional support with parenting or raising children? (past 12 months)</b>	
Yes	919 (68.9)
No	311 (31.1)
<b>Children whose parents who felt stress from parenting during the past month*</b>	
Parent usually/always feels stress from parenting	74 (5.9)
Parent seldom experiences stress from parenting	1172 (94.1)

\* Parent households included: two biological/adoptive parents, one biological/adoptive parent + one-step parent, or one biological/adoptive parent.  
\*\*Odds

Comparison of grandparent households and parent households. Credit: Andrew Adesman

Millions of children are being raised solely by their grandparents, with numbers continuing to climb as the opioid crisis and other factors disrupt families. New research being presented at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) 2018 National Conference & Exhibition shows that caregivers who step up to raise their grandchildren are overcoming unique challenges to manage just as well as biological and adoptive parent caregivers.

The study abstract, "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Are They Up to the Job?" will be presented on Monday, Nov. 5, at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. The study is the first to examine a nationally representative sample of children and directly compare households where children are being raised by their grandparents with those being raised by their parents.

"A large and increasing number of mothers and fathers aren't able to meet the responsibilities of parenthood, prompting their own parents to take on the primary caregiver role for their grandchildren," said senior author Andrew Adesman, MD, FAAP, Chief of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics for Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York. "Although these children are more likely to have endured one or more adverse childhood experiences and the grandparents themselves often face extra health and socioeconomic hurdles, our findings suggest they appear to be coping well."

The researchers analyzed and compared 2016 National Survey of Children's Health data from 44,807 parent-led households and 1,250 grandparent households. They determined that caregivers raising their grandchildren were more likely to have a greater number of physical and [mental health problems](#), have household incomes at or below the federal poverty line, have lower levels of education, and be single.

In addition, the [grandchildren](#) they were raising were more likely to

become angry/anxious with transitions, lose their temper and have other behavioral issues.

"This was not surprising, since we know that children in non-parental care are likely to have experienced more adverse childhood experiences and have an increased risk of behavioral problems as a result," said abstract co-author Sarah Keim, Ph.D., Principal Investigator at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

However, Keim said, grandparents and parents showed no difference when asked if the child "does things that really bother" them, is "harder to care for" than peers, or if they "felt angry with this child." In fact, grandparents and parents did not differ on most measures of parent coping, parenting stress, or caregiver-child interactions when stratified by child health and child age.

The study also found that a substantial proportion of both grandparent caregivers (31 percent) and parent caregivers (24 percent), reported that they did not have anyone "to turn to for day-to-day emotional support with parenting."

"Given that children being raised by their grandparents may pose greater behavioral challenges, and that nearly a third of the parenting [grandparents](#) reported they had no one to turn to for day-to-day emotional support with parenting, pediatricians and other health professionals caring for 'grandfamilies' must be mindful of these issues and be ready to refer families to counseling when needed, as well as refer them to supports groups locally and online," Dr. Adesman said.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

Citation: Grandparents: Raising their children's children, they get the job done (2018, November

2) retrieved 25 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-11-grandparents-children-job.html>

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