

1-1-2002

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Recommended Citation

Mutchler, Jan; Lee, SeungAh; and Baker, Lindsey A., "Grandparent Care in the Asian Population" (2002). *Gerontology Institute Publications*. Paper 25.

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Grandparent Care in the Asian Population¹

The purpose of this report is to provide information on Asian grandparent caregivers in the United States. Many grandparents are responsible for grandchildren who live with them in the same household. The 1996 Welfare Reform Act mandates that statistics be collected on grandparents who serve as caregivers to a grandchild. In response to this requirement, questions were developed for the 2000 Census of Population asking each adult about care for grandchildren living in the same household.² We use the census information to identify grandparents who are caring for grandchildren in two different types of households: skipped-generation households, in which a grandparent and grandchild live together but no parent is present, and three-generation shared care households, in which the grandparent claims responsibility for the grandchild but one or more of the child's parents are also present.³ Data from the 2000 Census 5% Public Use Microdata Sample are used in our calculations.

Grandparent care in Asian families

According to the 2000 Census of Population, more than 350,000 Asian⁴ adults live in the same household as one or more of their grandchildren who are under the age of 18. Included in this figure are nearly 71,000 individuals who report being “responsible” for one or more of those grandchildren.

As shown in Figure 1, the highest prevalence of living with and caring for a grandchild occurs among adults over the age of 55. This chart shows the percentage of Asian individuals at each age who report “living with a grandchild” (top line) and being “responsible for” grandchildren with whom they live (bottom line). More than 10% of Asian individuals aged 57 and over live with a grandchild; for those aged 59 and over the prevalence is above 15%. The prevalence of being responsible for a grandchild never exceeds 5% of the population, but is most commonly reported between age 60 and 70. The ratio of these figures—the number responsible for a grandchild as a proportion of the number living with a grandchild—shows that a majority of the youngest co-resident grandparents is responsible for the grandchildren with whom they live (see Figure 2). For individuals under 45, at least 40% of the Asian individuals who report living with a grandchild also report being responsible for them.

FIGURE 1. Percent Living with and Caring for Grandchildren, by Age, Asians, 2000

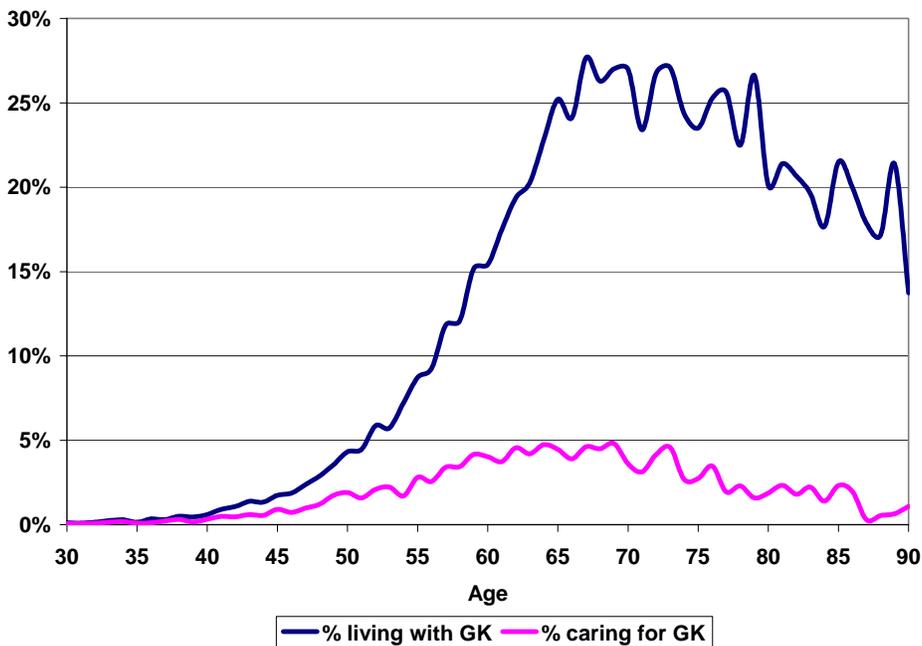
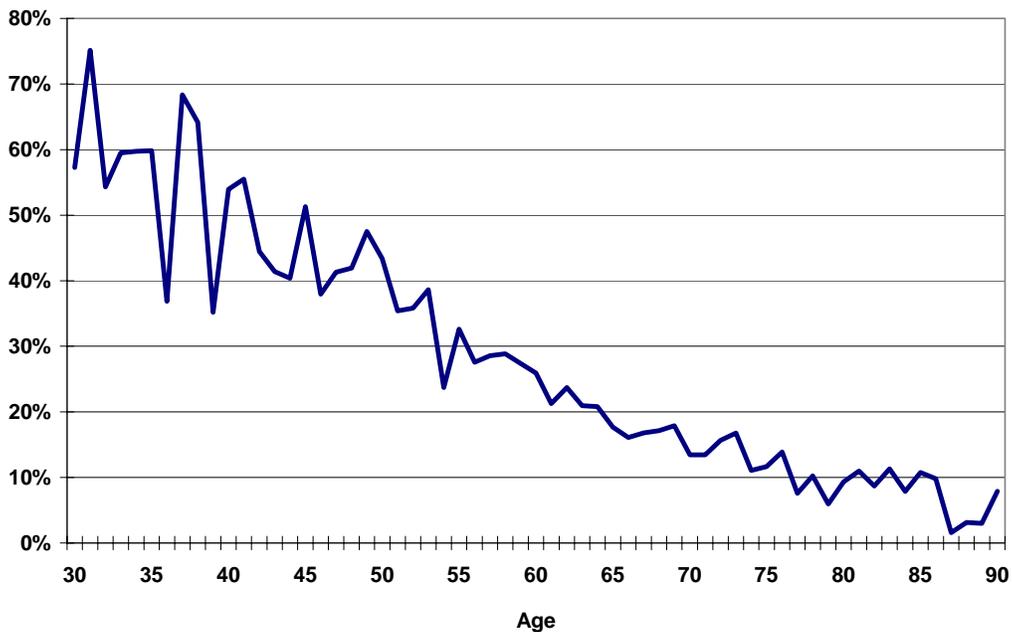


FIGURE 2. Percent Caring for Grandchildren, by Age Asians Living with a Grandchild, 2000



The remainder of this report focuses only on those grandparents who state that they are *responsible for* a grandchild living in the same household. Figures in this section are reported for caregiving units rather than for individual grandparent caregivers. Because grandparents who are married or cohabiting are likely to share caregiving responsibilities, we count these individuals as a single grandparent unit rather than “double count” them by treating them singly.⁵ We also present information separately for grandparent units in “skipped-generation” households (that is, in households including a grandparent and a grandchild but no “middle” or parent generation), and for “three-generation” households (households in which parents of the grandchildren also reside). Although the information is presented separately for these two fundamentally different types of households, we comment only on differences between the two that are substantial or particularly important.

Figure 3 shows that about three-quarters of the grandparent caregiving units are three-generation households among Asians; these households include someone who is most likely the child’s parent. However, 26% who claim responsibility are in skipped-generation households.

FIGURE 3. Grandparent Care Units by Generational Status of Household, Asians, 2000

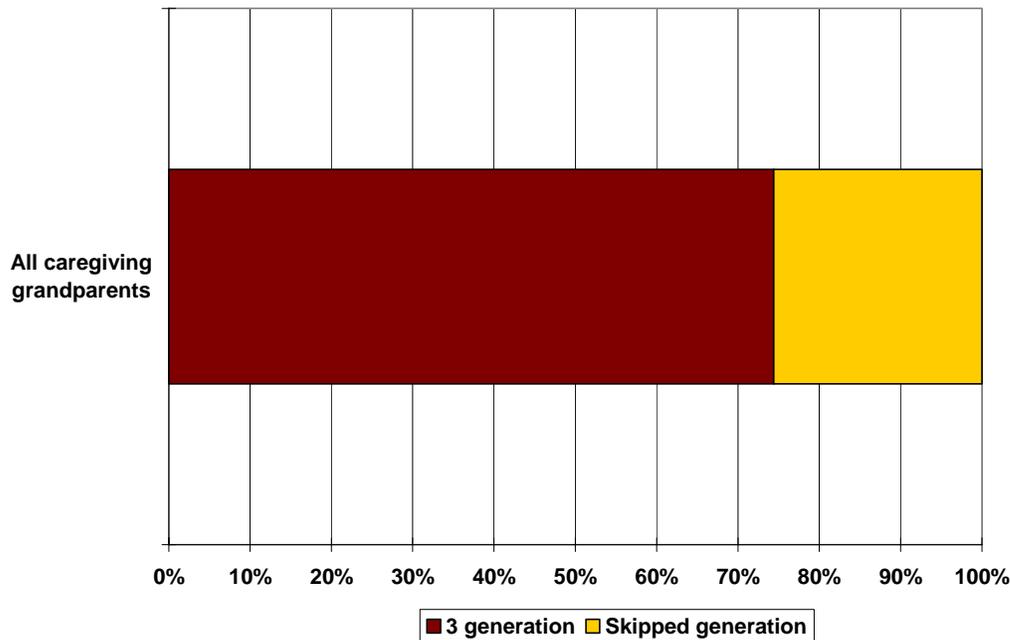


Figure 4 shows that more than half of the grandparent caregiver units are composed of married or cohabiting couples. An additional third of the units are single females; fewer than 8% are single men. Thus, grandmothers are present in the vast majority of grandparent care households.

FIGURE 4. Marital Status of Grandparent Caregivers, Asians, 2000

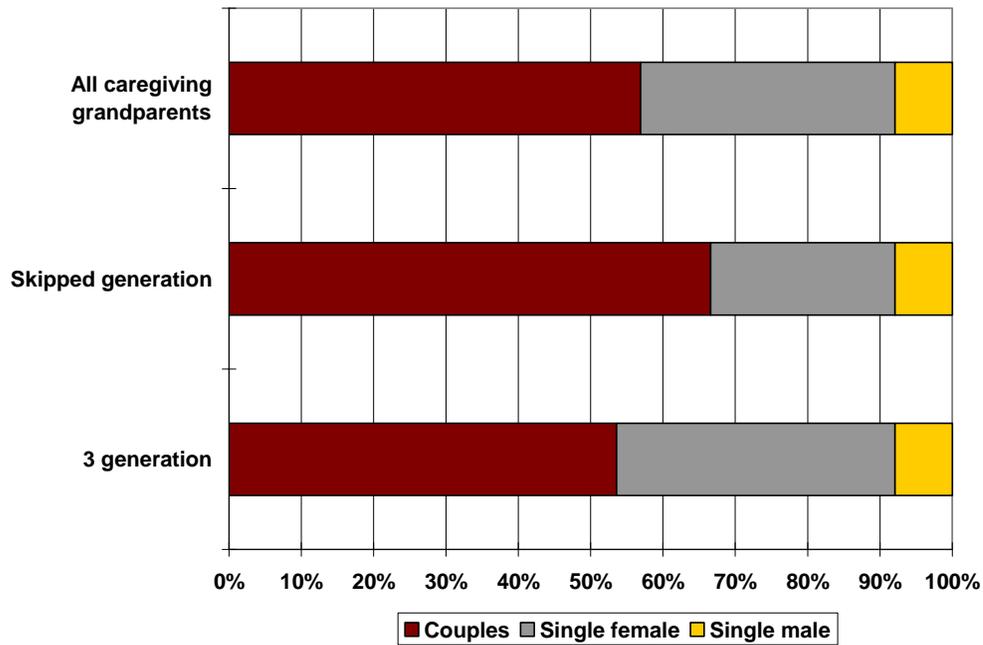
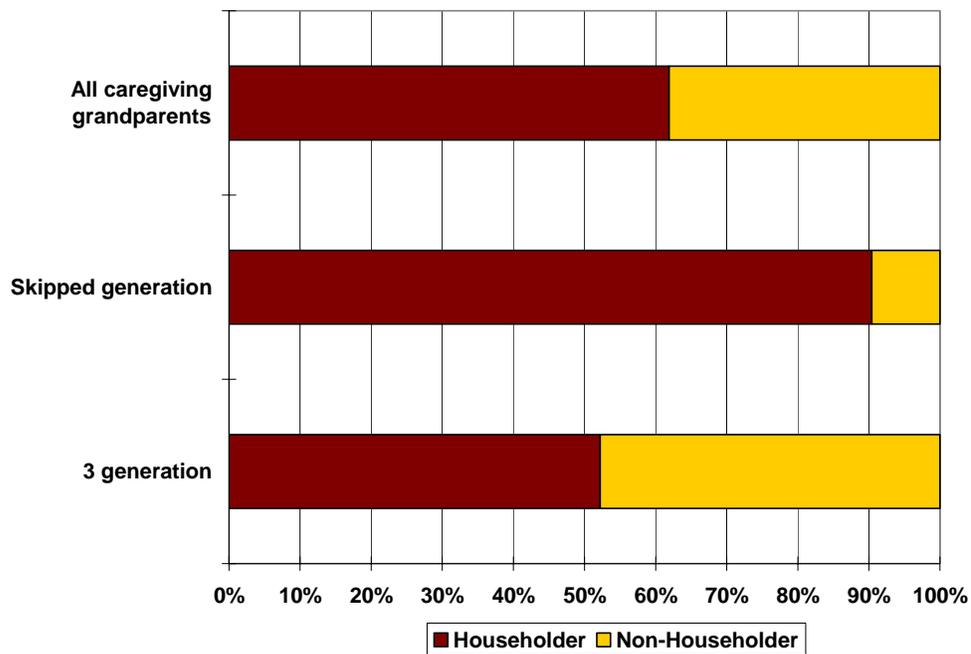


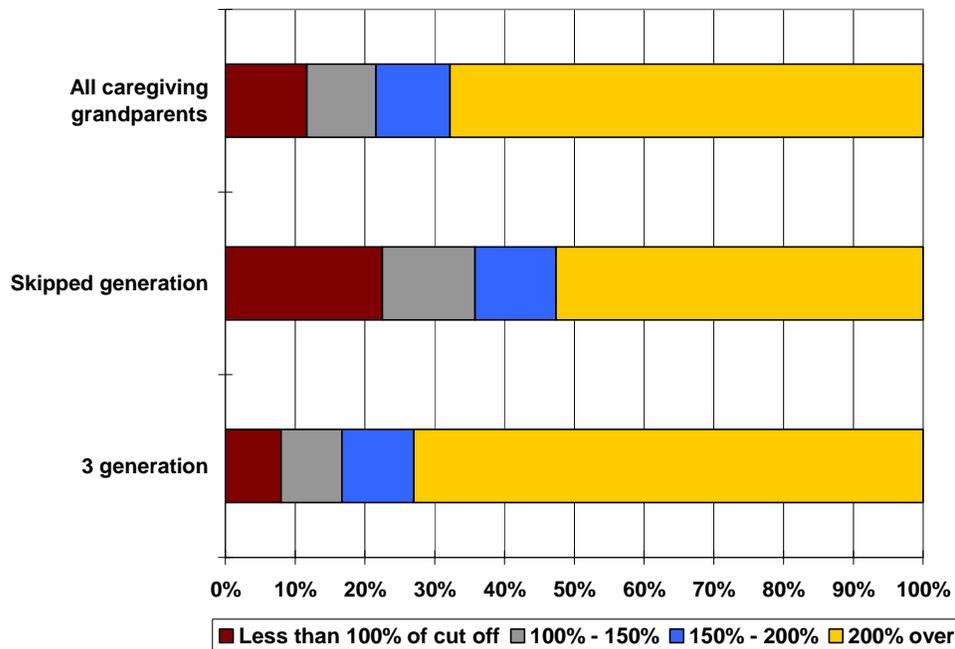
Figure 5 suggests that household headship is inconsistently related to taking responsibility for grandchildren in the Asian population. Overall, 62% of the grandparent caregiving units are also householders (that is, they own or rent the home in which the family lives). The fact that most grandparent caregivers are householders suggests that, when grandparents are asked about whether they are “responsible” for grandchildren with whom they live, they are very likely to be thinking about economic support and the provision of a home in choosing their response. This generalization is less accurate with respect to caregivers in three-generation households, nearly half of whom are not the householder.

FIGURE 5. Householder Status of Grandparent Caregivers, Asians, 2000



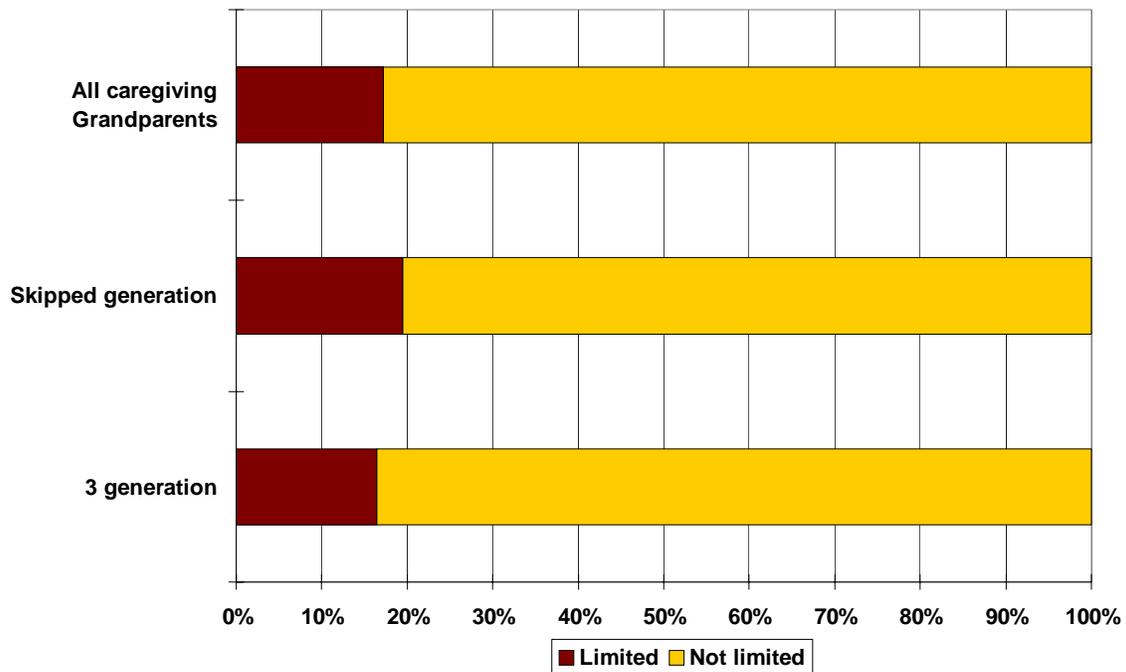
As a group, caregiving grandparents are often characterized as being a lower-income population. However, our figures on poverty and economic status suggest that this is not true for the Asian caregiver population (see Figure 6). More than 11% of Asian grandparent caregivers are poor, with an additional 10% reporting household incomes below 150% of the poverty cutoff (this group is sometimes referred to as the “near poor”). This is roughly comparable to national rates of poverty for all individuals in the United States (12%) as well as for all Asians (13%). Poverty is more prevalent among skipped-generation grandparent care households, with about one third of these grandparent caregiving units living in households with incomes below 150% of the poverty cutoff.

FIGURE 6. Poverty Status of Grandparent Caregivers, Asians, 2000



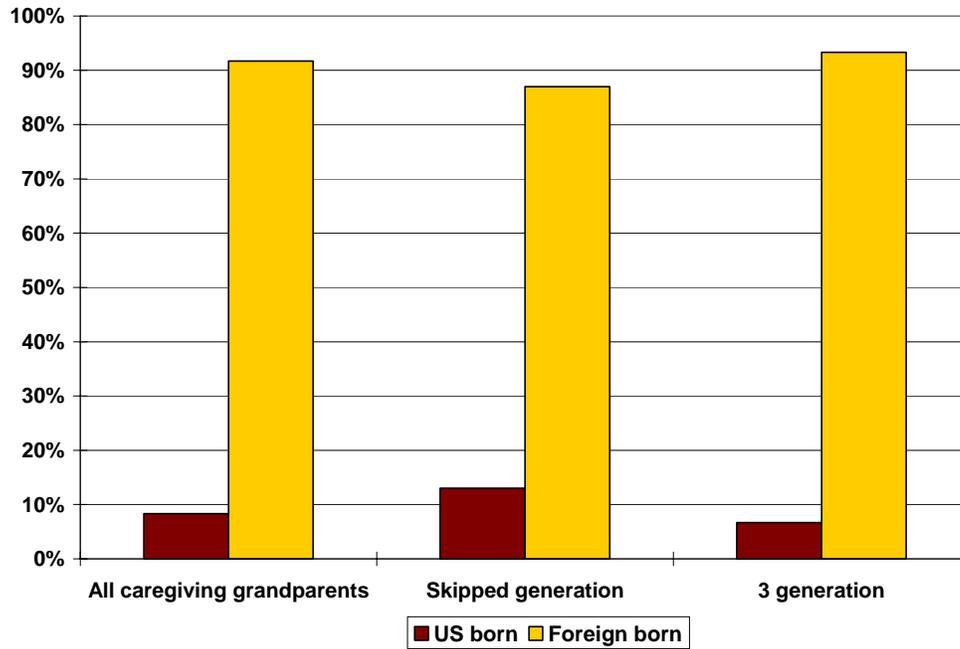
Disability levels are fairly low within this population, as reflected by a measure of physical disability. Adults were asked if a long-lasting condition substantially limited their ability to perform “basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.” Grandparent caregiving units including at least one grandparent reporting a physical difficulty were classified as limited. Physical limitations were reported by about 17% of the Asian caregiving grandparents. (See Figure 7).

FIGURE 7. Physical Limitation of Grandparent Caregivers, Asians, 2000



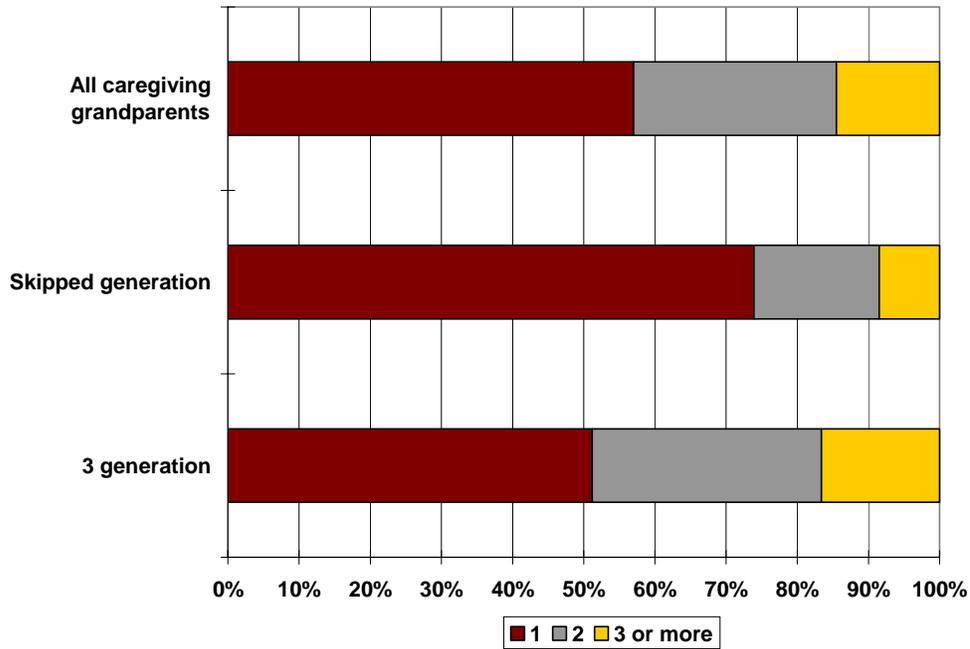
A large share of the Asian caregiving grandparent population is foreign-born. Overall, 92% of the Asians responsible for a co-resident grandchild were born outside of the United States. This is slightly higher than the foreign-born share for the adult (age 18 and over) Asian population at large (83% of whom are born outside of the United States). (See Figure 8.)

FIGURE 8. Immigrant Status of Grandparent Caregivers, Asians, 2000



Figures 9 through 11 display information about the grandchildren living in the grandparent care households.⁶ A majority of Asian grandparent caregivers lives with just one grandchild, but more than 40% live with two or more (see Figure 9). Multiple grandchildren are especially likely in three-generation households, where 49% of the grandparent units have two or more grandchildren.

FIGURE 9. Number of Grandchildren in Household, Asian Grandparent Caregivers, 2000



We find no evidence that either boys or girls are more common in grandparent care families. Among Asian grandparent care families, 62% have at least one granddaughter, and 65% have at least one grandson (see Figure 10). More substantial differences are observed with respect to age of the grandchildren (Figure 11). Overall, 62% of all grandparent units include at least one grandchild under age 6, or of preschool age. This age group is most likely to require “hands-on” care and supervision. More than 41% include at least one school-age grandchild aged 6 to 11, and nearly one-quarter has at least one teenager. Differences in this pattern between skipped-generation and three-generation households are notable. More than 67% of the three-generation caregiving households include pre-school aged children, compared to 49% of the skipped-generation households. The need for supplemental childcare may play a role in forming intergenerational households with young children. In contrast, nearly 30% of the skipped generation households include a teenager, compared to just 20% of the three-generation households.

FIGURE 10. Presence of Granddaughters & Grandsons in Household, Asian Grandparent Caregivers, 2000

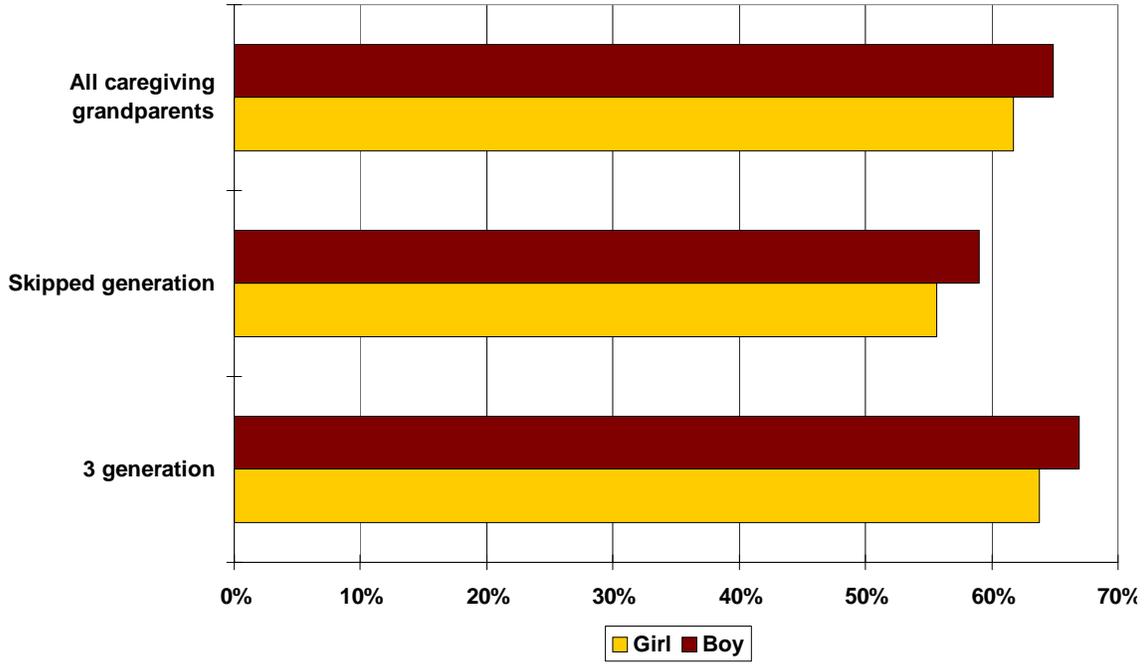
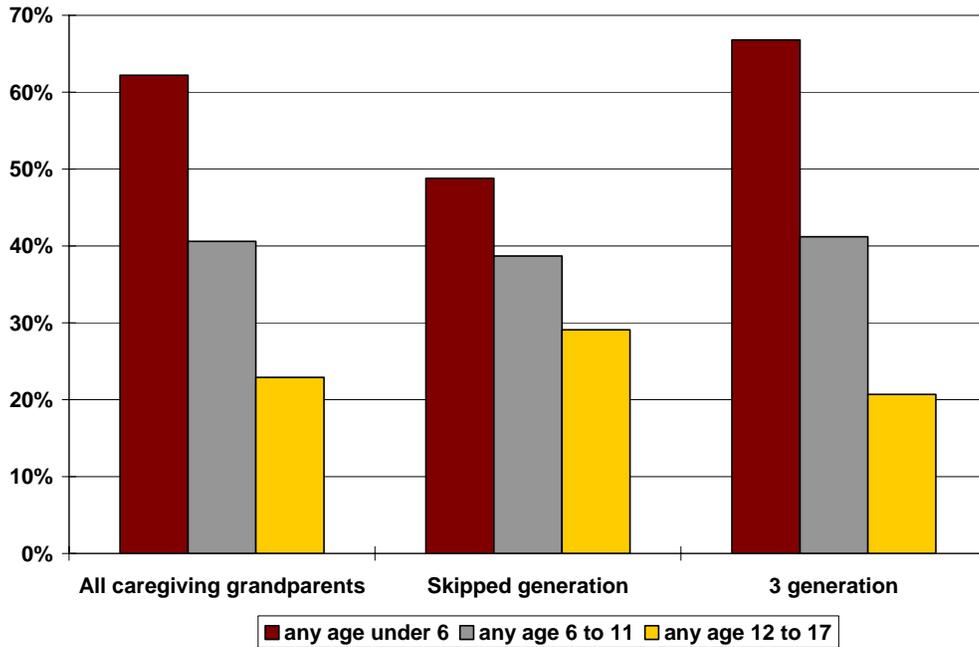


FIGURE 11. Age of Grandchildren in Household, Asian Grandparent Caregivers, 2000



Grandparents often play significant roles in the lives of their grandchildren. For some grandparents—including nearly 71,000 Asians—roles are extended to include supplemental or substitute caregiving for grandchildren with whom they live. This report suggests that caregiving roles are not uncommon among Asian grandparents, but that this care is commonly “shared” with the child’s parent who also lives in the household. A large share of older Asian grandparents lives with grandchildren, but proportionately fewer claim responsibility for them. Whereas grandparent caregiving within the population at large is associated with low income, this is not the case within the Asian population. Cultural factors and immigration history may play especially important roles in shaping grandparent caregiving among Asian families in the United States.

For reports on grandparent caregiving among other racial and ethnic groups in the United States, see <http://www.geront.umb.edu/inst/pubAndStudies.jsp>

Notes:

¹ This report is based on a study funded by a research grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (“Grandparent Families in the 2000 Census”; Grant #R03 HD045579-01).

² The Census questions are reproduced verbatim here, and asked for everyone aged 15 or over who lives in the household: (a) Does this person have any of his/her own grandchildren under the age of 18 living in this house or apartment? (If yes): (b) Is this grandparent currently responsible for most of the basic needs of any grandchild(ren) under the age of 18 who live(s) in this house or apartment? (See <http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/2000quest.html>).

³ The Census does not directly ask the identity of each child’s parent. In cases where a child’s parent is not the householder, we use subfamily information provided by the Census Bureau about family relationships within households to infer the presence of a child’s parents. The presence or absence of a child’s parent may have been erroneously inferred in some cases. That is, for an unknown number of cases, “three-generation” caregiving units may include the grandchild’s aunt or uncle rather than the child’s parent as the middle generation.

⁴ The Asian population included in this report includes individuals who report their race as Asian only, and who report that they are not Hispanic/Latino. The 2000 Census allowed individuals to mark more than one race. As well, individuals are asked in a separate question whether they consider themselves Hispanic/Latino or not. Our statistics for each race group include those who mark a single race (e.g., “African American only”) and exclude those marking more than one race (fewer than 3% of the total U.S. population marked more than one race). As well, individuals indicating that they are Hispanic/Latino are excluded from the

specified race categories. Individuals classified as Hispanic/Latino may be of any race.

⁵ Our calculations suggest that among married or partnered grandparents who claim responsibility for a grandchild, 85% of their spouses or partners also claim responsibility.

⁶ Grandparents are not asked which children in a household are their grandchildren. Among households in which the grandparent is the householder (the vast majority of grandparent care households, as seen in Figure 5), grandchildren can be easily defined because household relationship is defined with reference to the householder. In the remaining households, grandchildren are defined with reference to other relationships in the household (e.g., the sibling of the householder is inferred to be the grandchild of the householder's grandparent). Some error in our identification of grandchildren may have occurred among this relatively small number of households. Moreover, grandparents who claim they are responsible for a grandchild are not asked for which grandchild they are responsible. Our calculations are based on all grandchildren in the household, understanding that grandparents may be responsible for some grandchildren but not for others.