

# Planning Information Center Census Data Bulletin

RHODE ISLAND  
STATEWIDE  
PLANNING  
PROGRAM



Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program  
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## Grandparents in the Household

Grandparents play an important role in many households. In Rhode Island, an estimated 18,628 grandparents live with grandchildren under the age of 18, comprising 1.8% of the state's population according to American Community Survey 5-Year 2007-2011 dataset. This percentage is tied with Connecticut for highest in New England, although all the states in the region are between one and two percent. Rhode Island's most recent estimate of grandparents living with grandchildren is up slightly from the 2000 estimate of 16,957. Approximately three percent of households in the state have grandparents present, and an estimated 11,516 children under the age of 18 live in a household with a grandparent as the householder.

Planners may want to consider the needs of multigenerational households and in particular of grandparents for several reasons. As Rhode Island's population ages, these kinds of households may become more common. New or different housing typologies might be appropriate for these households, such as accessory dwelling units. These households may have particular transportation challenges, especially for grandparents who are senior citizens and care for their grandchildren. Many of these grandparents are part of the labor force and some of these households live in poverty; understanding the economic conditions of families with grandparents in the home can help municipal and state planners target their needs.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**18,628** grandparents live with grandchildren under 18 in Rhode Island

**1 in 3** speak a language other than English at home

**28.2%** are responsible for most of the basic needs of their grandchildren

*Source: 2007-2011 5-Year American Community Survey*

### Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of grandparents and grandchildren under 18 who live under one roof is slightly more racially diverse than the state as a whole. Seventy-four percent of grandparents and 75% of grandchildren in this group are white, compared with 81% of the population as a whole according to the 2010 Census. Nine percent of grandchildren and grandparents are Black or African-American, and 20% are Hispanic or Latino, compared with 6% and 12% in the population as a whole, respectively. One half of the children who live with grandparents who are householders are under the age of 6, and another thirty percent are between ages six and eleven.

### Caring for Grandchildren

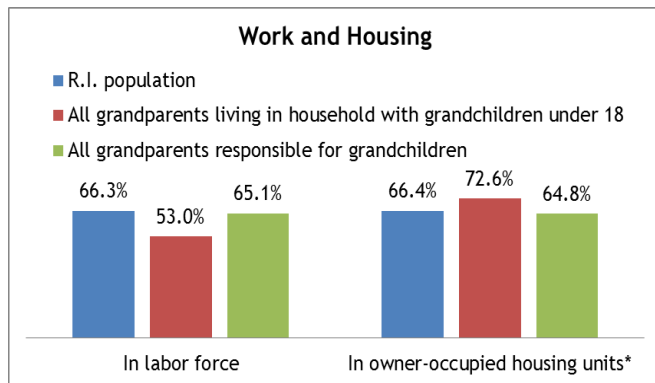
The American Community Survey asks grandparents whether they are responsible for most of the basic needs (such as food, clothing, and shelter) for their grandchildren. An estimated 28% of grandparents

## ABOUT THE DATA

Data in this Bulletin are drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2007-2011 five-year estimates and 2010 U.S. Census population counts. Each ACS estimate has an associated margin of error, which corresponds with a 90 percent confidence level; that is, there is a 90 percent chance that the true count is within the margin of error of the estimate. While there is no universal standard, a general rule of thumb is that reliable estimates have a margin of error no larger than one quarter of the estimate itself. All the ACS estimates in this bulletin fall under this threshold.

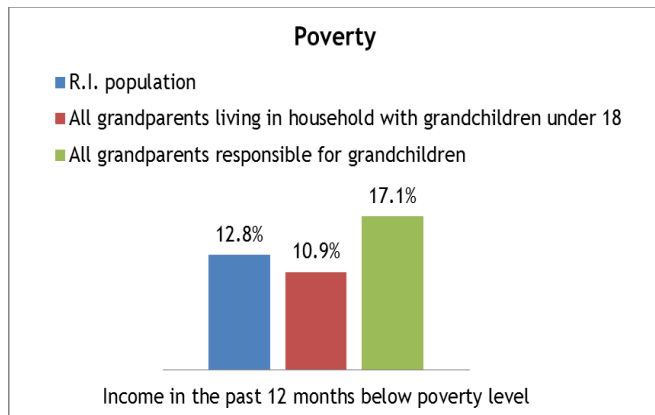
living in the same household as grandchildren are responsible for their grandchildren by this definition. These tend to be younger grandparents; of an estimated 5,248 grandparents who are responsible for grandchildren, 3,501 are between 30 and 59, and 1,747 are 60 years and over.

Grandparents responsible for grandchildren are nearly two-thirds female, and this share is statistically indistinguishable from the share of grandparents living with grandchildren overall. However, a greater share of grandparents responsible for grandchildren is in the labor force – 65% versus 53% of all in-home grandparents – suggesting the economic importance of grandparents to these households. Grandparents who share a home with grandchildren are more likely to live in an owner-occupied unit than the Rhode Island population at large, although fewer grandparents who are responsible for their grandchildren do so. The poverty



Source: 2007–2011 5-Year ACS (U.S. Census)  
 \*Owner-occupied housing units for R.I. population calculated as a share of population living in occupied housing units

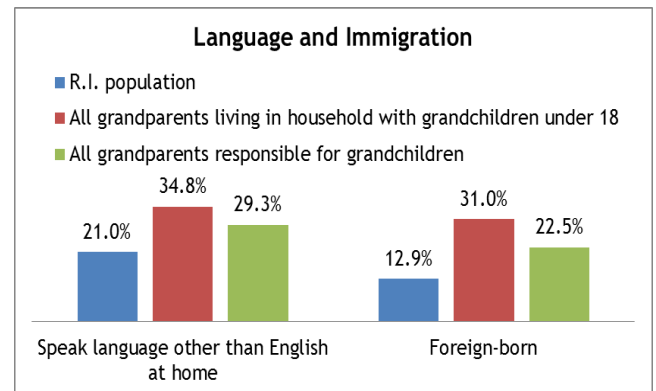
rate of grandparents responsible for grandchildren, 17%, is higher than the state’s overall poverty rate for individuals, 13%.



Source: 2007–2011 5-Year ACS (U.S. Census)

### Immigrant Generations

Many of the grandparents present in households were born in another country. While 97.0% of grandchildren living with a grandparent householder were born in the United States, 69.0% of grandparents who live with their grandchildren are foreign-born. Over one-third of grandparents who live with grandchildren speak a language other than English at home, and roughly one quarter speak English less than “very well.” Family members may be a key part of these grandparents’ communication and safety networks. For grandparents who are responsible for grandchildren, these estimates are a bit lower but the difference is not statistically significant; an estimated 29% speak a language other than English at home and 21% speak English less than “very well”.



Source: 2007–2011 5-Year ACS (U.S. Census)

## TO LEARN MORE...

To explore the 2011 ACS data on grandparents and grandchildren, visit the U.S. Census website, [American FactFinder](#). To look at this data in your city or town, select your municipality’s name under Geography/ County Subdivision, and use the keyword search. Because these data on grandparents and grandchildren in the household concern smaller populations, it is recommended to use 5-year ACS data to keep the margins of error as low as possible.

For further information about Planning Information Center resources, contact Amanda Martin at Rhode Island Statewide Planning: [amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov](mailto:amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov) or (401) 222-4720.