

**Insights and Spending Habits  
of Modern Grandparents:  
*A Look at African American  
and Hispanic/Latino  
Grandparents***

**August 2012**



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***A Look at African American and Hispanic/Latino***  
***Grandparents***

**Telephone survey data collected by Woelfel Research, Inc.**

**In-depth Interviews conducted by Alan Newman Research**

**Report Prepared by Jane C. Bittner**

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## **Executive Summary**

In late 2011, AARP commissioned two studies to better understand the insights and spending habits of modern grandparents. A report released in 2012 presented the results from two grandparenting studies, the first of which included in-depth interviews with grandparents and the second of which consisted of a national telephone survey of grandparents age 50+. The national telephone survey incorporated an oversample of African American and Hispanic/Latino grandparents; this report highlights findings from these over samples.

## **Key Findings**

- Minority grandparents said they believed teaching religion/spirituality was one of their top three roles in their grandchildren's lives, as compared to nonminority grandparents who did not place this activity in their top three roles. Almost eight in ten African American grandparents and three-quarters of Hispanic/Latino grandparents rated teaching grandchildren religion/spirituality in their top three grandparenting roles.
- Minority grandparents are more likely than nonminority grandparents to discuss difficult issues with their grandchildren, such as sex/dating, illegal drugs, and drinking/alcohol use. Over six in ten minority grandparents said they discussed drinking/alcohol use and drugs with their grandchildren, compared to half of the nonminority grandparents.
- Hispanic/Latino grandparents are more likely than any other group to say they have, and expect to, provide daycare for an extended period of time. Of the Hispanic/Latino grandparents who are currently the primary caregiver for their grandchildren, almost half said they expected to provide daycare *for 5 years or more*, and over four in ten said they expected to continue to do so.<sup>1</sup>
- African American grandparents are most likely to be, and expected to continue being, their grandchild's primary caregiver, in comparison to any other group. Of the African American grandparents who are currently the primary caregiver for their grandchildren, over four in ten said they were currently the primary caregiver *for 5 years to less than 18 years*, and three in ten expected to continue in this time frame.<sup>2</sup>
- African American grandparents are more likely to have a strong connection to their culture/roots, compared to other groups. Almost nine in ten African American grandparents said their connection to their culture/roots was *high (8-10 on a rating out of 10)*.

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on a very small sample (n=15) and should be considered for directional use only.

<sup>2</sup> This is based on a very small sample (n=23) and should be considered for directional use only.

- Hispanic/Latino grandparents are more likely to have a *good relationship with [their] grandchild's parent who is a different race or ethnicity than [them]*. Over eight in ten Hispanic/Latino grandparents agreed with this statement.
- African American grandparents are more likely to agree that grandparents and grandchildren who are of different races/ethnicities both have greater challenges than those of the same race/ethnicity. Over half of African American grandparents agreed with this statement.
- African American grandparents are more like to say they spend money on their grandchildren *to help with everyday living expenses, and because grandchildren ask for things*. Nearly six in ten African American grandparents agreed with these statements.

## **Background**

In 2011, AARP conducted the Grandparenting Survey, in which 1,904<sup>3</sup> U.S. grandparents, aged 50+, were randomly selected for a telephone interview. An additional oversample of 385<sup>4</sup> African American grandparents and 401<sup>5</sup> Hispanic/Latino grandparents was obtained. Woelfel Research, Inc. conducted the interviews, in either English or Spanish, from August 25<sup>th</sup>-October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

The survey included general information about grandparenting, as well as modules that provided a more profound insight into areas such as grandparents as daycare providers, grandparents raising grandchildren, and grandparenting in multicultural or multiethnic families. However, only those grandparents who met certain criteria were asked these more in-depth module questions.

This report is an executive summary of the findings related to African American and Hispanic/Latino grandparents. The original full report on the general survey is available online<sup>6</sup> as well as the full chart book detailing all of the findings.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The national sample accounted for a marginal sampling error with a confidence interval of  $\pm 2.2\%$

<sup>4</sup> The African American sample accounted for a marginal sampling error with a confidence interval of  $\pm 5\%$

<sup>5</sup> The Hispanic/Latino sample accounted for a marginal sampling error with a confidence interval of  $\pm 4.9\%$

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/grandparentsurvey>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/grandparentsurvey>

**Detailed Findings**  
**General Characteristics**

<u>STATS AT A GLANCE!</u>			
	National	African American	Hispanic/Latino
Average age (years) 1st became grandparent	<b>18-49</b>	<b>18-49</b>	<b>18-49</b>
Have 10+ grandchildren	<b>23%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>26%</b>
Closest grandchild lives ≤10 miles	<b>54%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>60%</b>

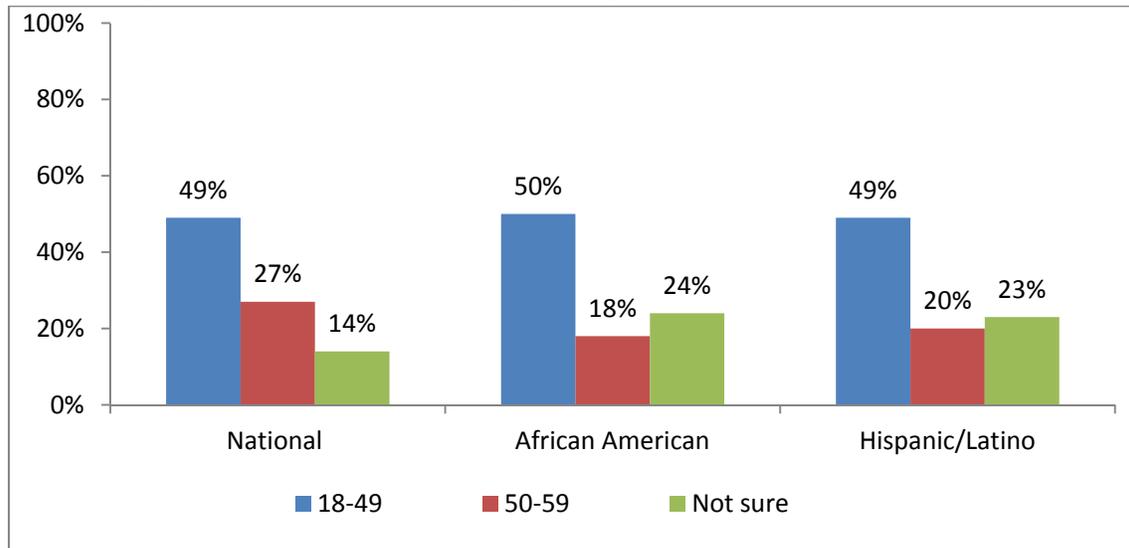
This section explores general characteristics of African American and Hispanic/Latino grandparents and the grandparenting experience. The general survey posed questions such as age when first became a grandparent, conversations with grandchildren, and physical distance from grandchildren. The summary below includes a truncated version of the results from the survey; full results for this section are available in the chartbook online.<sup>8</sup>

***Age when first became grandparent***

Figure 1 below shows almost half of all grandparents in this study first became a grandparent when they were between the ages of 18 and 49 years old: national sample (49%), African American sample (50%), Hispanic/Latino (49%). Differences were seen as almost three in ten (27%) grandparents from the national sample were 50 to 59 years old at the birth of their first grandchild, which is only true for two in ten African American (18%) and Hispanic/Latino (20%) grandparents.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/grandparentsurvey>

**Figure 1: Age when first became grandparent**



**Role of grandparents**

Table 1 below presents the roles grandparents feel they play in their grandchildren’s lives. The results in Table 1 combine the percent of grandparents who feel a role is theirs alone and those who feel a role pertains to both the grandchild’s parent and themselves. Although an overwhelming majority of the grandparents said teaching religion/spirituality was one of their roles, twice as many minority grandparents believe it is solely their role, not a parent’s, as compared to nonminority grandparents.

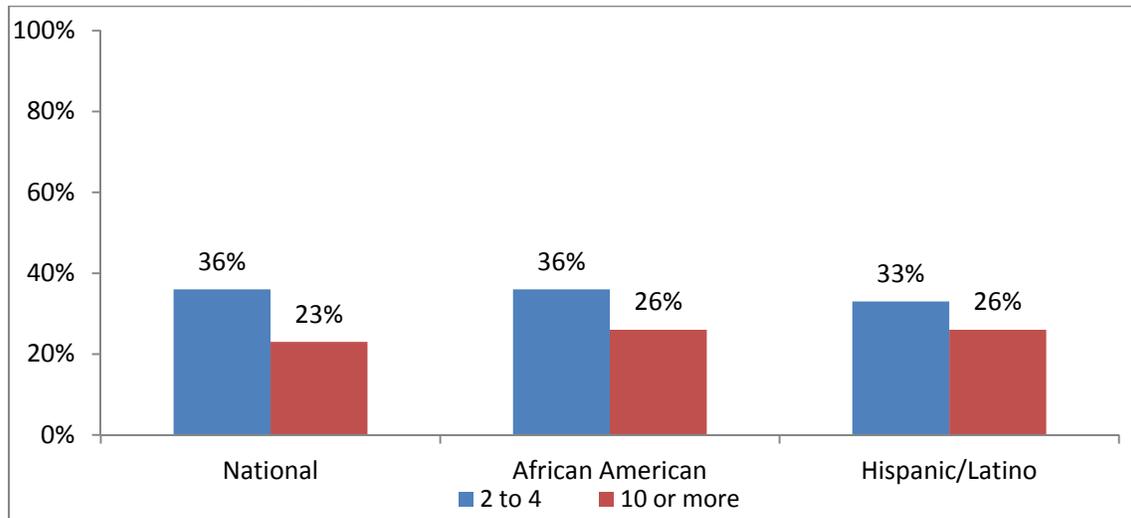
**Table 1: Role in grandchild’s life**

	National	African American	Hispanic/Latino
Have fun with	93%	89%	86%
Teach values	83%	87%	80%
Take to cultural events	77%	72%	67%
Teach religion/spirituality	71%	79%	75%

**Number of grandchildren**

Figure 2 shows that the number of grandchildren does not significantly differ among minority grandparents, as compared to nonminority grandparents. In a national sample, over one-third (36%) of grandparents said they have 2 to 4 grandchildren—which was similar to African American grandparents—and just over two-tenths (23%) said they have 10 or more grandchildren. Slightly fewer Hispanic/Latino grandparents (33% vs. 36%) say they have 2 to 4 grandchildren. Refer to chart book for full figure.

**Figure 2: Number of grandchildren**



**Frequency of seeing grandchildren**

Over half of all grandparents sampled in this survey live *10 miles or less* from their closest grandchildren: national sample (54%), African American sample (57%), and Hispanic/Latino sample (60%). Further, the majority of grandparents see their closest grandchildren on a weekly basis: national grandparents (52%), African American grandparents (57%), and Hispanic/Latino grandparents (60%).

However, as seen below in Table 2, over six in ten (61%) grandparents in the national sample feel they do not see their closest grandchildren *enough*, whereas only one quarter (24%) of African American grandparents and three in ten (28%) of Hispanic/Latino grandparents feel this way.

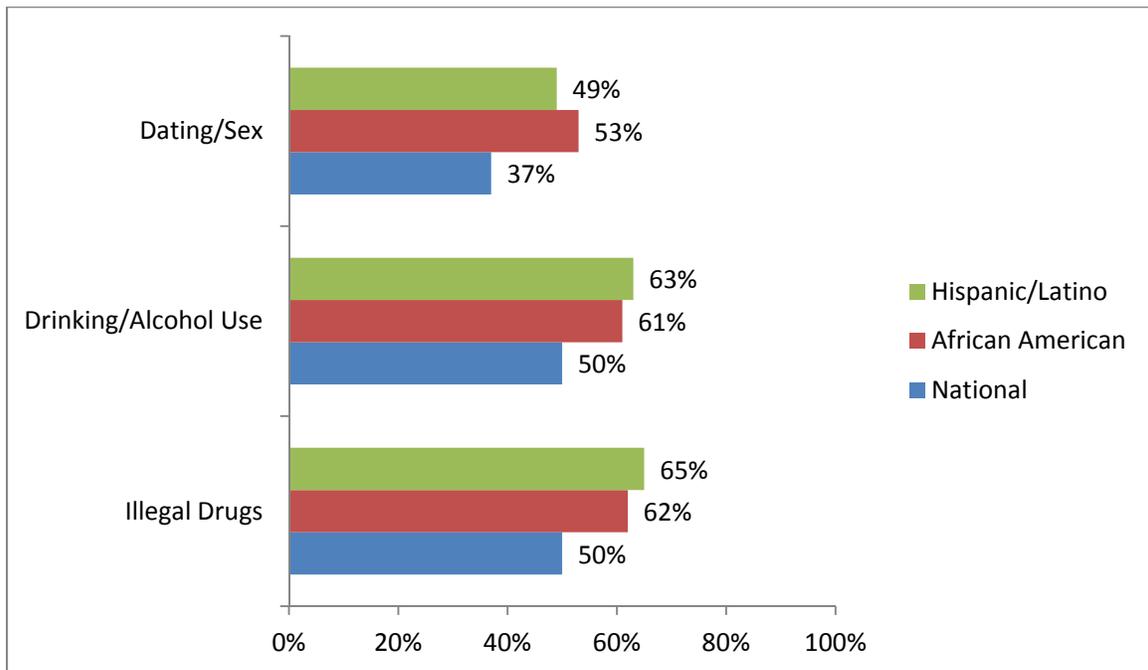
**Table 2: Feelings about frequency of seeing closest grandchildren**

	National	African American	Hispanic/Latino
<b>Right amount</b>	36%	64%	60%
<b>Not enough</b>	61%	24%	28%

**Topics discussed with grandchildren**

Minority grandparents are more likely than nonminority grandparents to discuss difficult topics with their grandchildren. Over six in ten African American and Hispanic/Latino grandparents were likely to discuss drinking/alcohol use (61% and 63%) and illegal drugs (62% and 65%), whereas grandparents in the national sample were less likely to discuss these topics and especially dating/sex.

**Figure 3: Difficult topics discussed with grandchildren**



**Grandparents providing daycare service**

**STATS AT A GLANCE!**

	Nonminority	African American	Hispanic/Latino
Provided $\geq$ 5 years of daycare	<b>39%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>52%</b>
Expect to continue providing daycare $\geq$ 5 years	<b>37%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>42%</b>

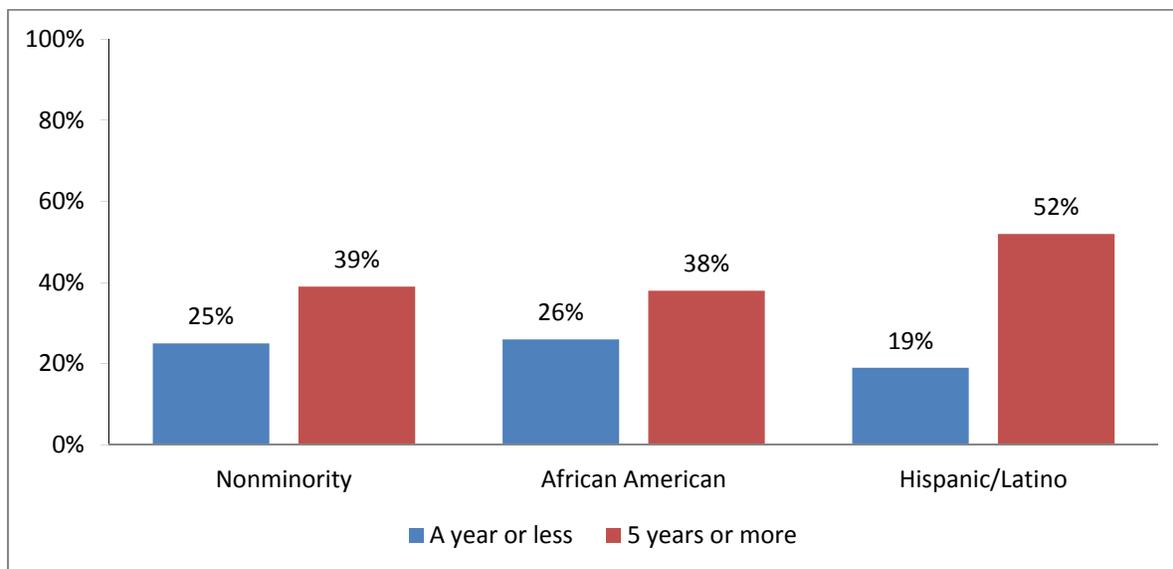
The general survey posed questions such as how many grandchildren one provides daycare for, the length of time daycare has been/expects to be provided, and the reasons behind grandparents providing daycare. This section is based on a third (33%) of the eligible survey participants (n=799) and includes a limited number of findings; full results for this section are available in the chartbook online.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/grandparentsurvey>

### Years provided daycare

Figure 4 illustrates that one-quarter (25%) of nonminority grandparents have been providing daycare for their grandchildren for *a year or less*, and almost four in ten (39%) for *5 years or more*. In contrast, just under two in ten (19%) Hispanic/Latino grandparents have been providing daycare for their grandchildren for *a year or less*, and over half (52%) for *5 years or more*.

**Figure 4: Years provided daycare**



### Years expected to provide daycare

Table 3 shows that less than one quarter (23%) of nonminority grandparents expect to continue providing daycare for their grandchildren for *one year or less*, and almost four in ten (37%) expect to continue doing so for *5 years or more*. Almost three in ten (28%) African American grandparents expect to continue providing daycare for their grandchildren for *a year or less*, and less than two in ten (15%) expect to do so for *5 years or more*. Slightly over one in ten (13%) Hispanic/Latino grandparents expect to continue providing daycare for their grandchildren for *a year or less* and four in ten (42%) expect to for *5 years or more*.

**Table 3: Years expected to continue providing daycare**

	Nonminority	African American	Hispanic/Latino
<b>A year or less</b>	23%	28%	13%
<b>5 years or more</b>	37%	15%	42%
<b>Don't know/not sure</b>	30%	40%	36%

## Grandparents living with and raising grandchildren

### STATS AT A GLANCE!

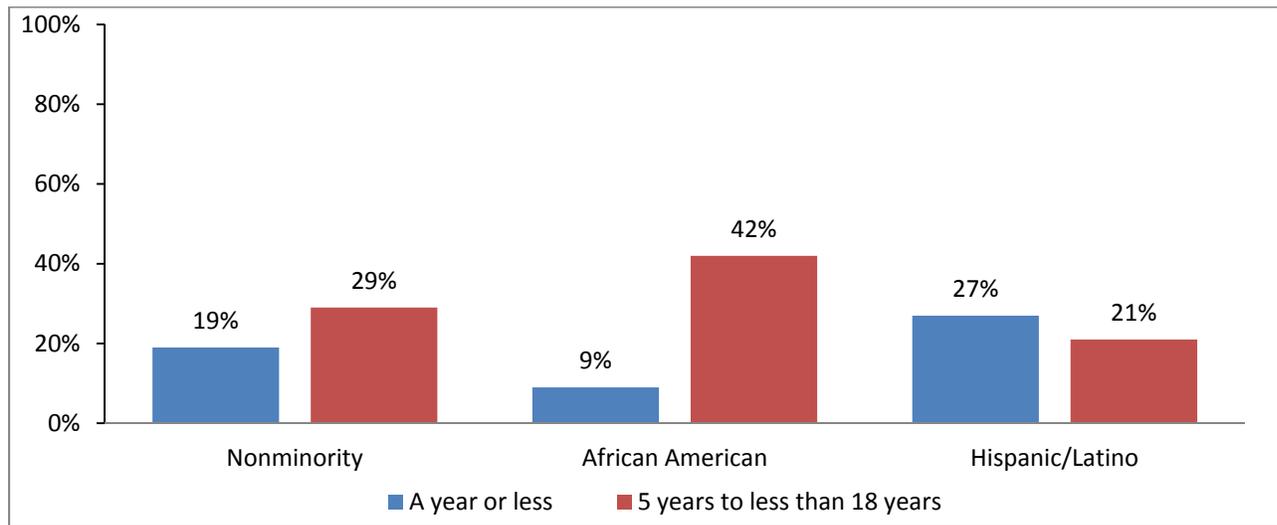
	Nonminority	African American	Hispanic/Latino
5 to <18 years as primary caregiver	<b>29%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Expect to be primary caregiver 5 years to <18 years	<b>11%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>13%</b>

The general survey posed questions such as the number of grandchildren living in the home, status of grandchildren's parents, and length of time caregiving. This section focuses solely on grandparents who are the primary caregiver to their grandchild (n=264) and includes an abridged summary of the findings; full results for this section are available in the chartbook online.<sup>10</sup>

#### ***Years as primary caregiver***

As seen in Figure 5, less than two in ten (19%) nonminority grandparents said they spent *a year or less* as their grandchild's primary caregiver, but almost one in three (29%) said they were the primary caregiver for *5 years to less than 18 years*. In terms of African American grandparents, less than one in ten (9%) said they were the primary caregiver to their grandchild for *a year or less*, but over four in ten (42%) said they were the primary caregiver for *5 years to less than 18 years*. In contrast, almost one-third (27%) of Hispanic/Latino grandparents said they were their grandchild's primary caregiver for *a year or less*, and only two in ten (21%) said they were the primary caregiver to *5 years to less than 18 years*.

**Figure 5: Years as primary caregiver**



<sup>10</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/grandparentsurvey>

### **Years expected to be primary caregiver**

As seen below in Table 4, over one in ten (12%) nonminority grandparents expected to be their grandchild's primary caregiver for 2 years, whereas none (0%) of the African American and Hispanic/Latino grandparents chose this timeframe. Instead, one in three (30%) African American grandparents expected to be their grandchild's primary caregiver for 5 years to less than 18 years, whereas only one in ten (11%) nonminority grandparents and slightly over one in ten (13%) Hispanic/Latino grandparents expected to be the primary caregiver for that time period.

**Table 4: Years expected to continue primary caregiving**

	<b>Nonminority</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>
<b>2 years</b>	12%	0%	0%
<b>5 years to less than 18 years</b>	11%	30%	13%
<b>Don't know/not sure</b>	20%	26%	27%

### **Grandparenting in multiracial/multiethnic families**

<b><u>STATS AT A GLANCE!</u></b>			
	<b>Nonminority</b>	<b>African American</b>	<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>
Strong connection to religious, cultural, ethnic roots	<b>70%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>67%</b>
Challenges faced by grandparents/grandchildren not of same race	<b>48%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>37%</b>
Good relationship with grandchild's parent of a different race	<b>65%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>83%</b>

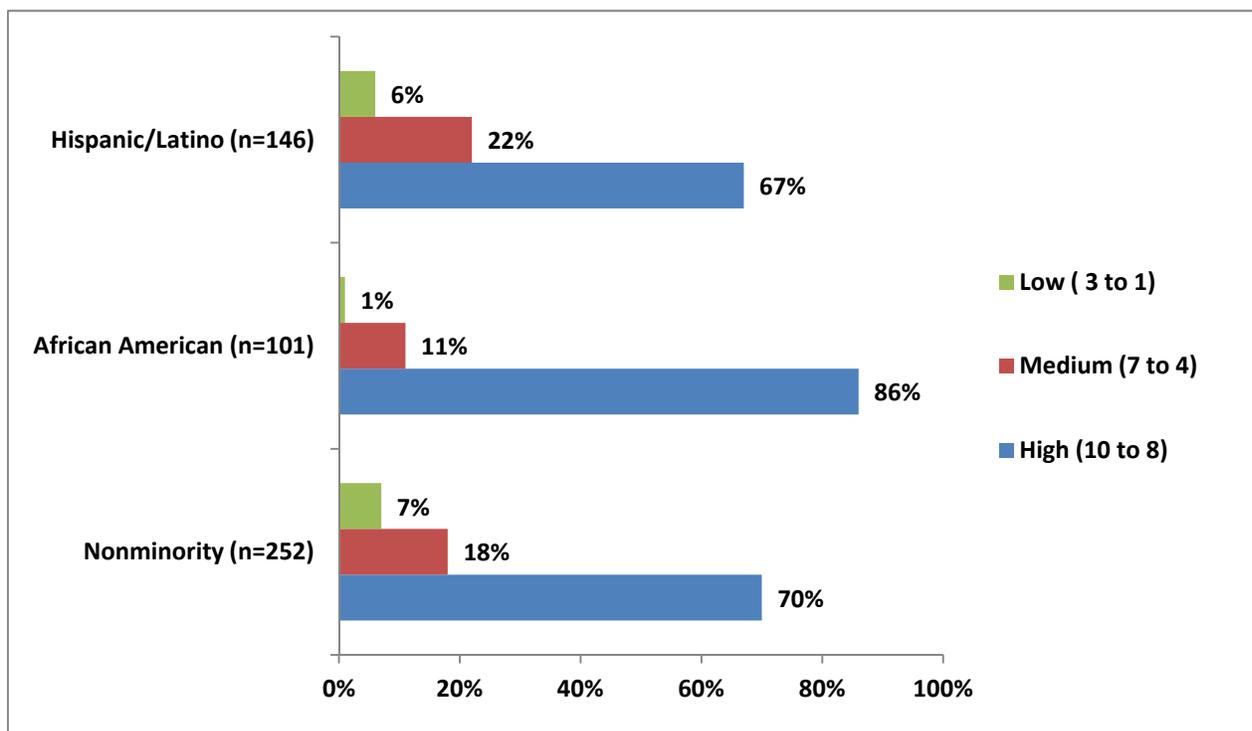
The general survey included a module designed to measure the thoughts and opinions of grandparents who have multiracial or multiethnic grandchildren or grandchildren from different races or ethnicities. This analysis includes all such grandparents (n=592); full results can be found within the chartbook online.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Connection to cultural roots**

Figure 6 below shows an overwhelming majority (86%) of African American grandparents felt a very strong connection to their roots. On the other hand, seven in ten (70%) nonminority grandparents felt a strong connection to their roots, and only two-thirds (67%) of Hispanic/Latino grandparents felt a strong connection to their roots.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/grandparentsurvey>

**Figure 6: Connection to own cultural, racial or ethnic heritage or roots**



**Opinions on grandparenting in multiracial/multiethnic families**

In the general survey, numerous questions were posed concerning the grandparent’s opinions on topics such as relations between grandparents and grandchildren of different/mixed races, how he/she relates to grandchildren of a different race, and how he/she perceives difficulties among family members of a different race. The following results highlight only a handful of findings; full results can be found in the chartbook online.<sup>12</sup>

As seen in Table 5 below, two-thirds (65%) of nonminority grandparents agreed that they had a *good relationship with [their] grandchild’s parent who is a different race or ethnicity*, as compared to over eight in ten African American (81%) and Hispanic/Latino (83%) grandparents who agreed with this statement. Half (50%) of nonminority grandparents agreed that *children who are of different races/ethnicities than their grandparents have more challenges than children who are not*. Similarly, just over half (53%) of African American grandparents agreed with this statement, but less than four in ten (37%) Hispanic/Latino grandparents agreed with this statement. Almost half (48%) of nonminority grandparents agreed with the statement that *grandparents who have grandchildren from a different race/ethnicity have more challenges than grandparents who do not have grandchildren from different races*, whereas over half (55%) of African American grandparents agreed with this statement, and less four in ten (37%) Hispanic/Latino grandparents agreed with this statement.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/grandparentsurvey>

**Table 5: Opinion about grandparenting in multiracial/multiethnic families**

	% Agree		
	Nonminority (n=282)	African American (n=101)	Hispanic/ Latino (n=146)
“I have a good relationship with my grandchild’s parent who is a different race or ethnicity than I am.”	65	81	83
Grandparents who have grandchildren from a different race/ethnicity have more challenges than grandparents who do not have grandchildren from different races.”	48	55	37
“Children who are of different races/ethnicities than their grandparents have more challenges than children who are not.”	50	53	37

### Spending and Economics

<u>STATS AT A GLANCE!</u>			
	National	African American	Hispanic/Latino
Spend money to help with everyday living expenses	<b>37%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>40%</b>
Agree economy has little effect on “good” parenting	<b>68%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>52%</b>

Grandparents who were not primary caregivers (n=2,398) were asked questions about spending habits and reasons why they spend money on their grandchildren. The second portion of this section includes grandparents’ (n=1,044) responses to questions concerning the current economy and its effect on spending and grandparenting. This section includes a limited number of results; full results can be found online in the full chartbook.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.aarp.org/grandparentsurvey>

**Reasons money is spent on grandchildren**

Table 6 below shows that more than nine in ten grandparents said they spent money on their grandchildren for *holiday/birthday gifts*. Slightly over half (53%) of national sample grandparents said they spent money to help with educational expenses, whereas almost six in ten (58%) Hispanic/Latino grandparents said they help with these expenses, and almost seven in ten (68%) African American grandparents said this. While less than four in ten (37%) national sample grandparents and 40% of the Hispanic/Latino grandparents said they spent money to help with everyday living expenses, almost six in ten (57%) African American grandparents said they helped with everyday living expenses. Almost one in three national sample grandparents said they spend money *because grandchildren ask for things*, whereas over four in ten (43%) Hispanic/Latino grandparents and over half (52%) of African American grandparents said this was a reason.

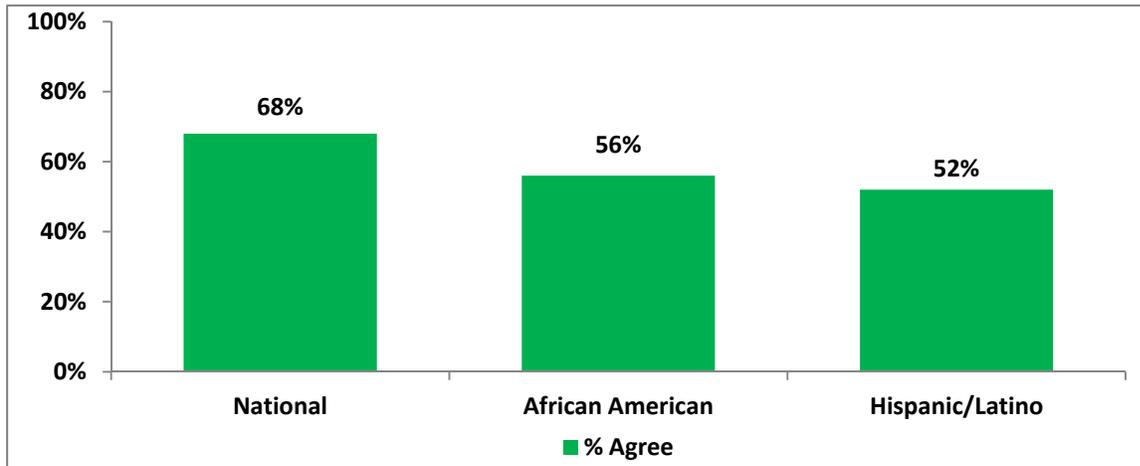
**Table 6: Reasons grandparents spend money on grandchildren**

	% Yes		
	National (n=1832)	African American (n=357)	Hispanic/ Latino (n=371)
<b>Holiday/Birthday gifts</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>To help with educational expenses</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>To help with everyday living expenses</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Because grandchildren ask for things</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>43</b>

**Effect of economy on “good” grandparenting**

Figure 7 below shows that seven in ten (68%) grandparents in the national sample agreed the economy had little effect on their ability to be a “good” grandparent, as compared to less than six in ten (56%) African American grandparents and roughly half (52%) of Hispanic/Latino grandparents.

**Figure 7: Small effect of economy on “good” grandparenting**



## **Summary**

From this research, we see that minority grandparents are more likely than nonminority grandparents to list teaching religion/spirituality as one of their sole roles. Minority grandparents are also more likely to report that they talk to their grandchildren about difficult topics such as dating/sex, alcohol, and illegal drugs. Hispanic/Latino grandparents are more likely to provide long-term daycare for their grandchildren compared to African American and nonminority grandparents—who are more likely than Hispanic/Latino grandparents to provide short-term daycare. African American grandparents are the most likely to provide long-term primary care and the least likely to provide short-term primary care for their grandchildren, compared to nonminority and Hispanic/Latino grandparents. Finally, grandparents in the national sample were more likely to say the economy had a small effect on their ability to be a “good” grandparent compared to minority grandparents.