Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents
(A national survey of grandparents age 50+)

Complete summary report and chart book available at: aarp.org/grandparentsurvey
General Information and Acknowledgements

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In-depth Interviews (IDI)
- Respondents: 143 grandparents identified in previous AARP study
- Fielded: August 2011
- 30-minute telephone interview

National Random Digit Dial (RDD) Telephone Interview
- Respondents: 2,485 Grandparents (age 50+)
- Fielded: August 25 to October 6, 2011
- 20-minute telephone survey
  - 10 minute core questions
  - 4 modules (respondent assigned to one module): Multiethnic/Multiracial families, Live With Grandchildren and Primary Care Providers, Daycare Providers, Spending and Economic Impact
  - Oversample of African Americans (n=385) and Hispanic/Latinos (n=401)

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011
Who are the study grandparents?

- Average age of a first-time grandparent is 47
- Nearly half (49%) of grandparents were under 50 when their first grandchild was born
- Average age of a grandparent in AARP study is 69
- 55% are married, while 40% are divorced or widowed
- 62% are retired, 15% still work full time
- Many are dealing with grandparenting in divorced, blended, and multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic families

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
Who are the study grandparents?

Over two in five (44%) have a high school diploma or less.

Nearly half (46%) reported a household income of $50k or less.

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
Who are the grandchildren?

About half (49%) have grandchildren from both a son and daughter.

The majority (61%) say they are equally close to all of their grandchildren.

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
How do grandparents see themselves?

Nine in ten (89%) say they play an important role in their grandchildren lives.

Two-thirds (66%) say they do an above average job as a grandparent.

Source: *Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents* - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
Topline Overview

- Grandparents’ Role
- Grandparents’ Spending Habits
- Grandfathers
- Grandparents connecting
- Grandparents sharing heritage and skills
Grandparents’ Role

Grandparents are very involved in the day-to-day care of their grandchildren.

“This generation of grandparents realizes that our children are in crisis, whether it’s because both parents work and they’re exhausted, or there’s a breakup in the family or there are money problems. With today’s economy… these grandparents know that they have to step up to the plate because they’re truly needed.”

(Expert Interviewee from Grandparenting Scan)

Source: Continuum Crew AARP Grandparenting Scan Report - October 2011
Grandparents’ Role

Some grandparents are primary caregivers while others provide daycare daily.

✓ 11% are living with their grandchildren. This percentage is higher for Latino grandparents (13%) and African American grandparents (19%).
  ✓ 47% also have the parents living with them
  ✓ 35% have been living with grandchildren for more than five years

✓ 32% who are not primary caregivers provide (or provided) daily daycare services for their grandchildren
  ✓ 33% have provided these services for more than five years
  ✓ 34% expect to be providing daycare for five years or more

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
Grandparents’ Role

Grandparents are also providing help in any way they can including financial support.

Grandparents help financially with:
- educational expenses (53%)
- everyday living expenses (37%)
- medical or dental expenses (23%)

Grandparents say they need additional information on:
- important role they play (41%)
- children’s developmental stages (30%)
- grandparents’ legal rights (29%)

“…grandparents are standing by to support (pay for) their grandchildren’s [education].”

“Grandparents are even getting involved in their grandchild’s healthcare, whether by turning to their doctor … for CPR classes or by taking their grandkids to doctor appointments…”

(Consultant from Grandparenting Scan)

Sources: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904] Continuum Crew AARP Grandparenting Scan Report - October 2011
Grandparents’ Role

Grandparents feel they play a rich and meaningful role in the raising of their grandchildren.

Grandparents feel it is both the parents’ and their role to:

- teach values (80%)
- take grandchildren to cultural events (72%)
- teach religion and spirituality (67%)
- tell the family history (66%)

• 28% said it’s only the grandparent’s role

“I can help make sure they grow up right…give them guidance.”

(IDI participant)

Grandparents talk to their grands about:

- morals and values (78%)
- staying safe (73%)
- school/career plans (72%)
- religion/spirituality (66%)

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
What do grandparents worry about?

Topics grandparents are discussing with their grandchildren mirror what they worry about most. The most frequently listed issues were around the topics of health, safety, the economic future, education and college, moral development and religion or spirituality.

“...I worry about the quality of life they'll have when they are adults...the economy and jobs... Things have deteriorated, there won't be opportunities there for them.” (IDI participant)

“[This generation] is not learning basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic...[they are] too dependent on computers...” (IDI participant)

“[I'm concerned that my] grandkids will get in with the wrong crowd and be swayed to do something that takes them away from focusing on classes and doing well in college.” (IDI participant)

“[I worry about their lack of] spiritual upbringing (none are in Christian schools). They are missing some of the religious and spiritual upbringing (they do get some)” (IDI participant)

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; IDI = In-depth Interviews [n=143]
Grandparents’ Spending

Even during difficult financial times, grandparents try to put their grandchildren’s needs first.

- 25% spent $1k or more on their grandkids in the past 12 months
- 55% say the economy has not had an impact on spending on grandchildren
- 65% say the economy has little to no affect on their ability to be a good grandparent

“[I was] laid off in October, but [I] try not to have the situation affect my grandchildren.”

(IDI participant)

“We still [spend on our grandchild], but it makes a bigger impact [on us] than it did in the past.”

(IDI participant)

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
IDI = In-depth Interviews [n=143]
Grandparents’ Spending

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]

- Birthdays: 95%
- Holidays: 95%
- Enjoy Buying: 89%
- Entertain/Have Fun: 82%
- Educational Expenses: 53%
- Everyday Expenses: 37%
- Asked for Things: 28%
- Medical/Dental: 23%
It’s Paw Paw’s Turn!

Grandfathers are playing a greater role in raising their grandchildren.

“There is more emphasis and interest on the part of grandfathers. They told us over and over again that they missed out on when their children were young…they just love to see this (grand) child develop and be part of their lives and they’re much more hands on than certainly the grandfathers of previous generations.”

(Expert Interviewee from Grandparenting Scan)

Source: Continuum Crew AARP Grandparenting Scan Report - October 2011
It’s Paw Paw’s Turn!

Grandfathers are caregivers and spend time just having fun with their grandchildren.

- 16% of grandfathers are currently providing daycare (same proportion as grandmothers) and 30% provided daycare in the past.

- 43% of grandfathers (vs. 33% of grandmothers) say it’s their role to spoil their grandchildren.

- Grandfathers watch TV (71%), play physical games (63%) and go on outings (56%) with their grands.

“…keeps old Paw Paw moving around…”
(IDI participant on the joys of being a grandparent)

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
Grandparents Crave Connection

Grandparents are looking for more ways to connect with their grandchildren.

“Regardless of generation, today's grandparents are more connected than ever to their children and grandchildren. Technology is the great enabler, though they are still huge consumers of traditional media. Furthermore, they use traditional channels for peer-to-peer engagements – that is, grandparents supporting each other.”

(Consultant from Grandparenting Scan)

Source: Continuum Crew AARP Grandparenting Scan Report, October 2011
Grandparents Crave Connection

Many grandparents feel they do not see their grandchildren enough.

When speaking about grands who live closest to them:
✓ 52% say they see them at least once a week
✓ 34% say they don’t see them enough

When speaking about grands who live furthest from them:
✓ 65% say they see them at least every few months
✓ 61% say they don’t see them enough

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
Grandparents Crave Connection

Grandparents use various ways to try to stay connected. Technology creates a challenge for some.

How are grandparents communicating with their grands?

- Phone calls (92%); weekly (58%)
- Cards/letters (64%); every few months (23%)
- Email/Texting/Skyping (39%); weekly (20%)

“I would like to know what abbreviations mean - like "LOL" and other teenagers’ email and texting abbreviations.”

(IDI participant on what information on grandparenting he would like to have)

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
Grandparents Crave Connection

Grandparents are looking for information that will help them stay connected and communicate with their grandchildren.

Grandparents want information on:

- Fun things to do with grands (43%)
- How to talk about issues grandchild is dealing with (35%)
- Keeping in touch (33%)
- Connecting with grandchildren (31%)
- How to talk to teens (31%)

“[I need information on the] best way to try and talk to grandkids about drinking and smoking, sex, drugs - everything they’re encountering.”

(IDI participant)

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Core Questions [n=1904]
Sharing Heritage, Teaching Skills and Exploring Together

The ability to impart legacies (cultural, religious, skills, etc.) to their grandchildren is essential.

“Grandparents with different cultural heritages and religious backgrounds are emphatic about sharing and continuing those traditions …”

“Regardless of socioeconomic status, grandparents are seeking everyday activities to help them connect with their grandchildren. Sharing skills, talents and hobbies with grandchildren is an extension of this trend.”

(Consultant from Grandparenting Scan)

Source: Continuum Crew  AARP Grandparenting Scan Report, October 2011
Sharing Heritage, Teaching Skills and Exploring Together

Grandparents see their role as teaching their grands about their heritage and roots.

Many have grandchildren who are mixed race (18%), a different race than the grandparent (17%) or a different ethnicity than the grandparent (15%).

- 87% say it is important that grands know about the grandparents’ heritages
- 72% say they try to help the grandchild know about all of the grandchild’s heritages
- 50% say grandparenting in multiethnic or multiracial families can be challenging

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; Multicultural/Multiracial/Multiethnic Module [n=547]
Sharing Heritage, Teaching Skills and Exploring Together

Grandparents are very active and enjoy sharing hobbies and playing with their grands. IDI participants list things they do with their grands.

“...adventure things, zip lining, amusement parks, go walking...”

“...play guitar with him, talk about sports... go swimming, shoot hoops ...”

“...he teaches me how to do this Wii...”

“Go swimming, play catch, go to minor league baseball games, ... play tennis...”

“...catch bugs and have a little science class...”

“...taught her to knot sew...”

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; IDI = In-depth Interviews [n=143]
The grandparenting experience

Many characterized grandparenting as providing the enjoyable aspects of parenting without some of the negative aspects, particularly the primary responsibility for care and discipline.

“…no morning sickness, no bloat with all the pleasure…[and] more fun…” (IDI participant)

“Love it …you get to spoil them rotten, then send [them] home to mom and dad.” (IDI participant)

“[I] can help make sure they grow up right…give them guidance.” (IDI participant)

“Wonderful- it’s why we became parents. It’s what we expected - that we would have children and our children would have children.” (IDI participant)

“Outstanding! Great! Terrific! Raising your children, you have to discipline. Grandparents are off duty. You can take pride in their accomplishments with grades and sports…. Sharing with them goals & morals.” (IDI participant)

Source: Insights and Spending Habits of Modern Grandparents - October 2011; IDI = In-depth Interviews [n=143]
Key points

- Grandparents are extremely positive about the grandparenting experience. Nearly all (93%) grandparents who have taken care of their grandchildren say they thoroughly enjoy it.

- Grandparents are very involved in the day-to-day care of their grandchildren—some by necessity, others by desire. As major contributors to their grandchildren’s upbringing, grandparents feel they play a rich and meaningful role in the raising of their grandchildren.

- In addition to assisting with the day-to-day care, grandparents want to ensure their grandchildren have new experiences including learning about their heritages.

- Today’s grandfathers are more than financiers for their grandchildren; they play an active role in their grandchildren’s lives.

- While grandparents are more connected than ever, lack of technological savvy, family relations, distance and busy schedules can make connecting with grandchildren a challenge.
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Sources:

Market Scan
“Grandparenting Today: A Report for AARP”
Prepared by Continuum Crew, October 3, 2011
For more information: Joyce Snyder; IVS-RSA-50+Rsch-Strat Intel;
(202) 434-3818; JSnider@aarp.org

Qualitative and Quantitative Surveys
“AARP Grandparent Qualitative Telephone In-depth Interviews (IDIs)”
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Conducted by Woelfel Research, Inc.
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