

COUNTING KIDS

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren



2000 Census Brief

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Purpose

"Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" is the fifth in the Counting Kids series of reports produced by Kansas Action for Children in collaboration with the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare. The series includes, "The Changing Face of Kansas Children," "A Retrospective Look at Young Children in Kansas," "A Portrait of Kansas Families" and "Growing Up Poor in Kansas."

These reports, offering glimpses of the state's children and families, are intended to provide policymakers with key data that will enable them to think beyond the present and plan for long-term needs.

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**KANSAS
ACTION FOR
CHILDREN**

Making a difference for Kansas children.



Introduction

Increasing numbers of Kansas citizens are finding themselves becoming day-to-day caregivers for the second time – caregivers to their grandchildren. Although most children do not reside with their grandparents, the percentage of those who do is increasing dramatically.

- 29,000 Kansas children (four percent of children under age 18) reside in grandparent-maintained households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).
- Approximately 18,000 Kansas grandparents are providing day-to-day care for their grandchildren (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).
- Of the grandparents who function as caregivers for their grandchildren, approximately 50 percent reside in just four Kansas counties (Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Wyandotte).
- Between 1990 and 2000, there was a 43 percent increase in the percentage of grandchildren residing in grandparent-maintained households in Kansas, an increase which is much higher than that for the nation (30%).

The increasing number of grandparents assuming day-to-day caregiving responsibilities for their grandchildren is creating a need for policymakers and community-level service agencies to revisit their policies and procedures originally designed for parent-child arrangements to accommodate the increasing grandparent-grandchild arrangements that exist.



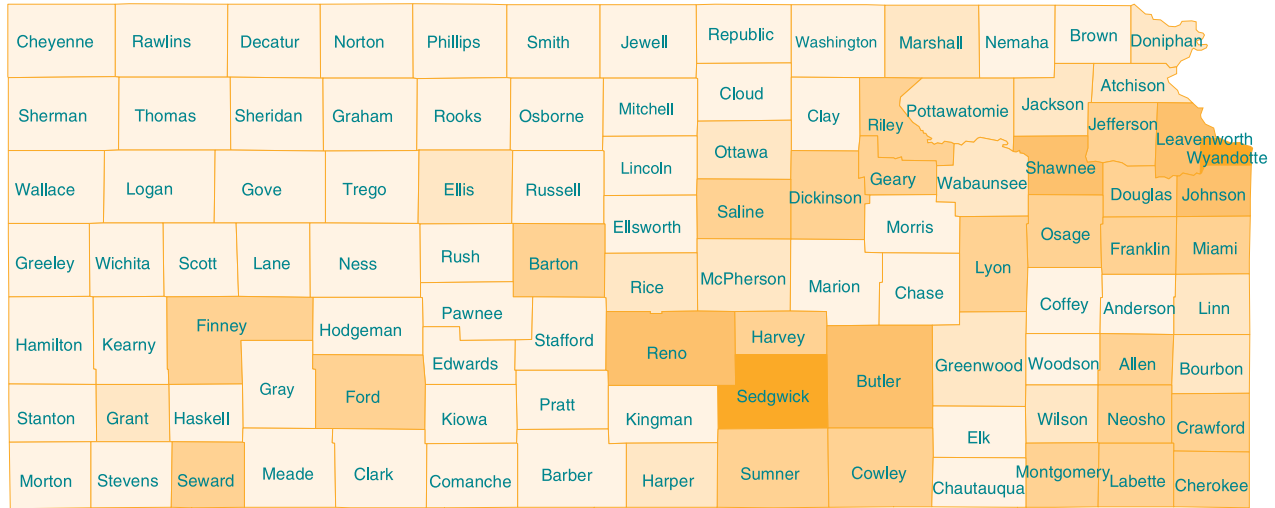


Day-to-Day Care

Although some grandparents provide daily care for their grandchildren out of a natural extended family structure, others assume the caregiver role for their grandchildren due to issues such as parental incarceration, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, illness and death.

- There are approximately 18,000 Kansas grandparents who provide day-to-day care for their grandchildren, some caring for multiple grandchildren (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).
- Approximately 50 percent of the Kansas grandparents who serve as day-to-day caregivers live in just four Kansas counties: Sedgwick, 4,066; Wyandotte, 2,301; Johnson, 1,443; and Shawnee, 1,351.
- Seventy-five Kansas counties have less than 100 grandparents who provide daily care for their grandchildren.

Social programs and policies overall need to keep pace with the increasing numbers of grandparents caring for their grandchildren - a pace that may be important to keep in areas such as education, healthcare and the workforce.



Number of Grandparents Responsible for their Grandchildren

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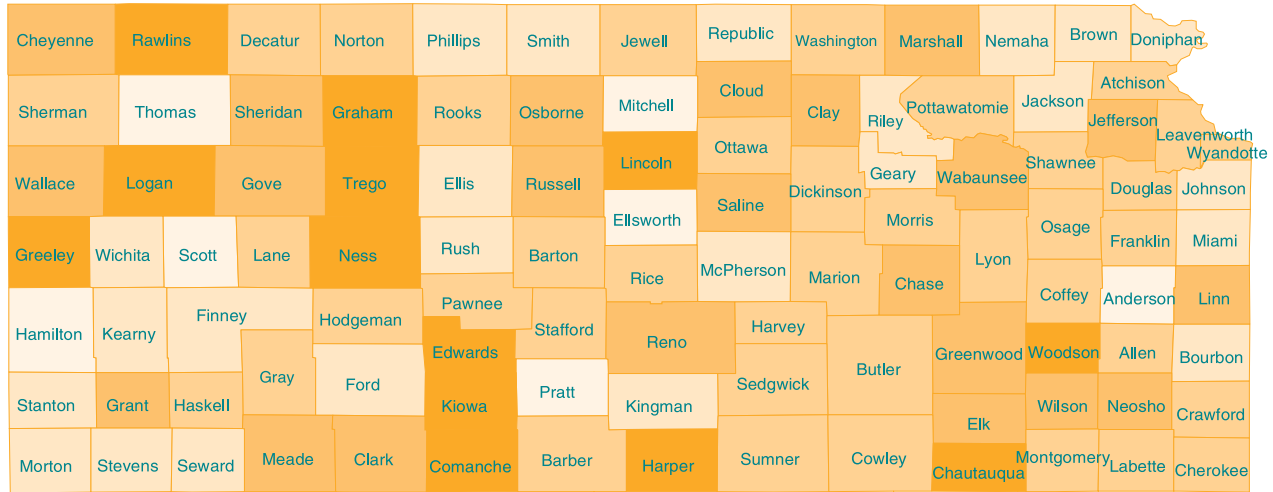


Living Arrangements

Approximately 35,000 grandparents in Kansas reside with their grandchildren. Of the population of grandparents who reside with their grandchildren, about one-half of them also provide day-to-day care for their grandchildren, a pattern that varies widely by county.

- In Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Wyandotte counties, there is a significant percentage of grandparents (48% on average) who not only reside with their grandchildren, but provide day-to-day care for them.
- For five Kansas counties (Comanche, Graham, Ness, Rawlins and Trego), although the actual number of grandparents residing with their grandchildren who provide day-to-day care is low (under 20), 100 percent of the families who have grandparents residing with their grandchildren also have these grandparents providing day-to-day care for them.
- The Kansas counties in which grandparent caregiver arrangements do not exist are rare. In just two Kansas counties, Mitchell and Scott, there are no grandparents acting as caregivers for their grandchildren documented.

Possibly as a natural extension of family support, even when grandparents reside with their grandchildren, they assume day-to-day caregiving responsibilities for the children. Because of this arrangement, an extension of services beyond the traditional parent-child family is needed to fit this different family arrangement.



Percentage of Grandparents Living with Grandchildren who are Responsible for their Grandchildren

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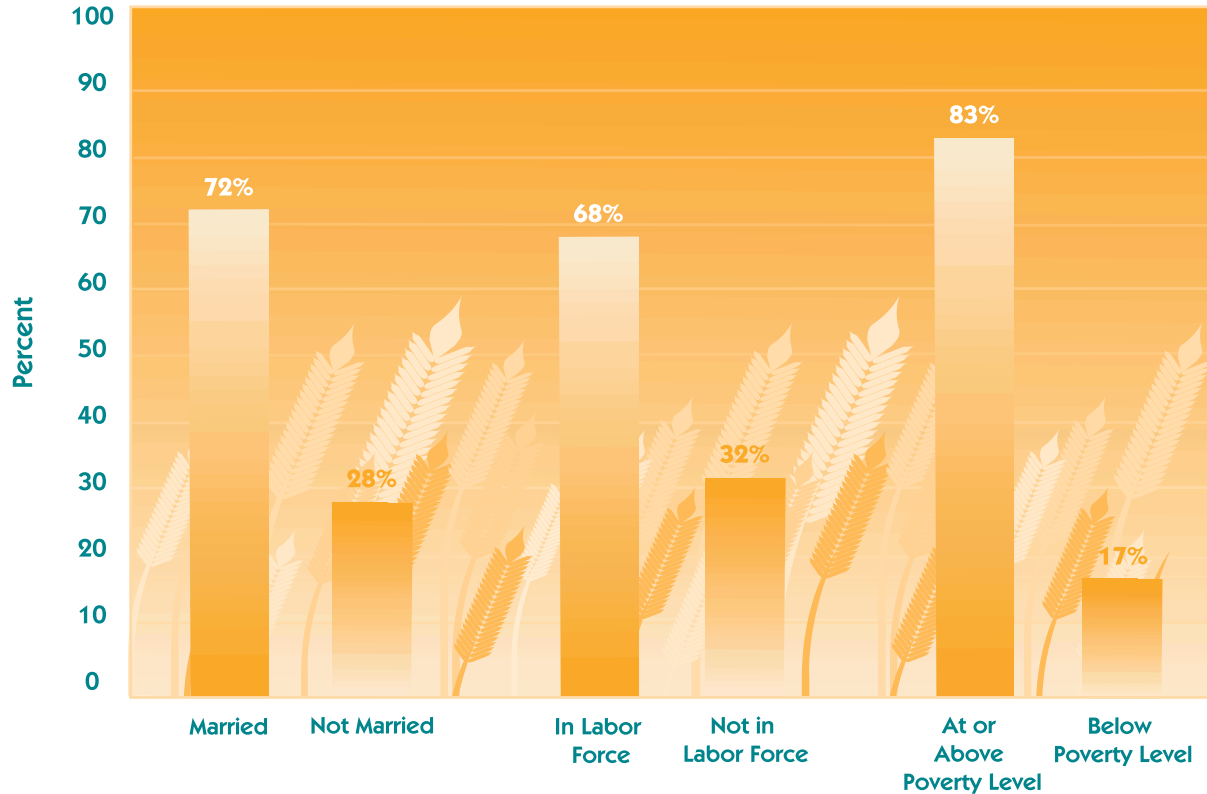
Characteristics of Grandparent Caregivers

Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are often middle-aged, married, working, living at or above the poverty level and are caring for young children.

- Nationally, more than half of the grandparents who serve as caregivers to their grandchildren (65%) are between the ages of 45 and 64 years; another 17 percent are 65 or older (Generations United, 2002).
- The children for whom these grandparents care are most often young: 51 percent are under six years of age; 29 percent are 6 to 11 years of age; and 20 percent are 12 to 17 years of age (Generations United, 2002).
- Although the majority of the grandparents caring for their grandchildren in Kansas are married, 28 percent are raising their grandchildren as single grandparents; single grandmothers are much more likely to be caring for their grandchildren than single grandfathers.
- Most Kansas grandparents caring for their grandchildren are also participating in the labor force (68%).
- Of the grandparents caring for their grandchildren in Kansas, 17 percent are living below established poverty levels. Nationally, single grandmothers are much more likely to be raising grandchildren in poverty.

The characteristics of grandparent caregivers underscore the importance of ensuring access to essential family supports including child care, health care and out-of-school activities.

Characteristics of Kansas Grandparents Responsible for their Grandchildren





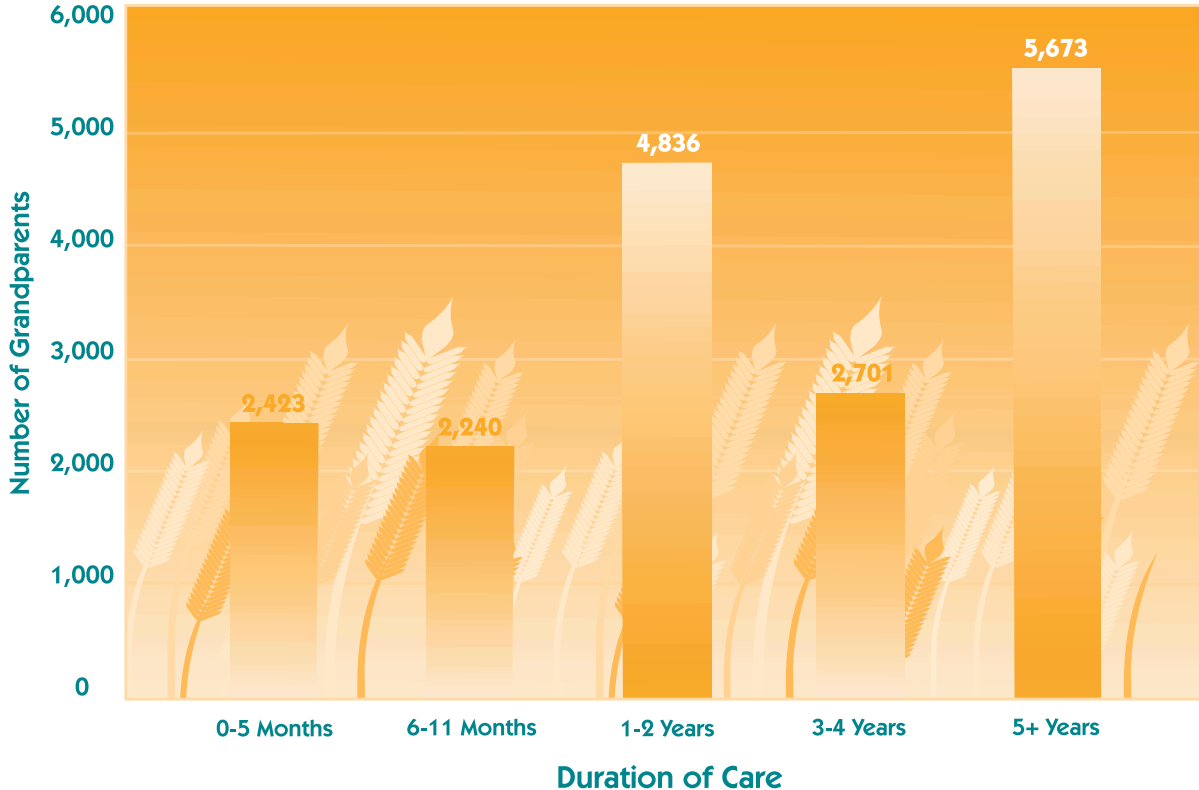
Duration of Caregiving

For the large majority of grandparents in Kansas who provide day-to-day care for their grandchildren, the caregiving arrangement does not appear to be short term.

- About three out of four grandparents in Kansas (74%) who provide care for their grandchildren have done so for one or more years.
- Twenty-seven percent have provided care for one to two years.
- Fifteen percent have provided care for three to four years.
- Thirty-two percent have provided care for five or more years.

Almost half of the grandparents providing day-to-day care for their grandchildren have done so for three or more years. The long-term nature of this caregiving arrangement indicates that it is not a temporary situation, but rather a stable family structure. Given this stability, policy and service initiatives are needed to address the needs of these families.

Number of Kansas Grandparents Responsible for Grandchildren by Duration of Care





Policy Implications

At a time when adults look forward to relaxing in their later years, perhaps enjoying visits from their grown children and new grandchildren, an increasing number of older adults are taking on the role of daily caregiver for their grandchildren. In Kansas alone, approximately 18,000 Kansas grandparents, primarily concentrated in Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Wyandotte counties, are providing day-to-day care for their grandchildren. Out of a natural extended family structure or a parent's inability to care for their children due to problems such as incarceration, substance abuse and child maltreatment, many adults 45 years of age and older are finding themselves caring for children who are young (about half with grandchildren under six years of age), with or without parent support, while they continue to work. Possibly meant to be a temporary arrangement when prompted by parent inability to provide caregiving, most Kansas grandparent caregiving arrangements become somewhat long term. Almost three out of four grandparents who provide care for their grandchildren have done so for one or more years; almost one out of two grandparents have done so for three or more years.

Despite the increasingly observed grandparent-grandchild caregiving arrangement, grandparents often encounter challenges as they care for their grandchildren – challenges that are often related to legal custody issues.

Although grandparents may need to obtain educational services or to be involved in educational decisions for their grandchildren, not having legal custody of their grandchildren makes this difficult. Similar problems are encountered in the medical arena (e.g., access to records and affordable health insurance for grandchildren, involvement in decisions). Given the increasing number of grandparents who are taking on the role of caregiver for their grandchildren and the fact that this caregiving arrangement is somewhat long-term, policy and service provisions to address the needs of this increasingly observed type of family are required. Advocates have targeted four areas needing attention in policy initiatives (Generations United, 2002):

- *Legal.* In order to access educational, medical and financial services on behalf of their grandchildren or to have legal involvement in decisions around such services, grandparents often need access to legal services which facilitate full custody or temporary/permanent guardianship for the grandchildren in their care.





- *Physical and Mental Health.* Many grandparents and grandchildren are at risk for poor physical and mental health outcomes as a result of the precipitating conditions surrounding grandparent-grandchild care. Grandparents and grandchildren need services that are affordable and address their unique needs.
- *Education.* In addition to the access issues described above, many educational systems are not targeted toward children in grandparent-grandchild family structures. Educational strategies to work with these families need to be developed to help with academic success. In addition, grandparent caregivers need to have involvement in education information and decisions regarding their grandchildren.
- *Housing.* About one out of four children living with grandparent caregivers lack affordable housing or reside in senior housing that cannot accommodate multiple children. Therefore, assistance for such families is needed (Generations United, 2002).

To make Kansas the best place in the nation to raise children, policies and procedures to address the needs of grandparent-grandchild families are essential. Kansas grandparents and their grandchildren are counting on you.



REFERENCES

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OUR MISSION

Kansas Action for Children advocates for policies and programs that ensure and improve the physical, emotional and educational well-being of all Kansas children and youth. KAC is an independent and nonpartisan voice on their behalf.



KANSAS ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Making a difference for Kansas children.

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This report also can be viewed on our Web site: www.kac.org

