Grandparents: A Critical Child Care Safety Net



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

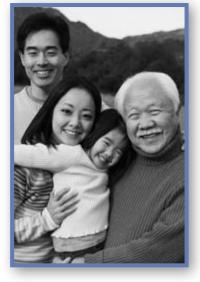
NACCRRA, the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, is our nation's leading voice for child care. We work with more than 800 state and local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies nationwide. These agencies help ensure that families in 99 percent of all populated ZIP codes in the United States have access to high-quality, affordable child care. To achieve our mission, we lead projects that increase the quality and availability of child care professionals, undertake research, and advocate child care policies that positively impact the lives of children and families. To learn more about NACCRRA and how you can join us in ensuring access to high-quality child care for all families, visit us at www.naccrra.org.

NACCRRA worked with Lake Research Partners (LRP) to survey grandparents nationwide on a variety of child care issues. LRP designed and administered the survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 500 grandparents throughout the United States, ages 40 and older with at least one grandchild under the age of 18. The survey was conducted August 7-14, 2008. Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from a random list of adults ages 40 and older. The sample was stratified geographically based on adults in each region. The data were weighted slightly by party identification, race, age, and region to reflect the attributes of the actual population. The margin of error is +/-4.4 percent.

The survey sought to find out if grandparents were providing child care for their grandchildren, if they were involved in child care decisions for their grandchildren, the number of hours each week they provided care, the reason they wanted to provide child care to their grandchildren, whether they were caring for unrelated children while they were caring for their grandchildren, whether they were paid for their services or whether they helped their children pay for the cost of child care the parents used, and whether or not they support policies to strengthen the quality of care and/or make child care more affordable.

The results of the survey are consistent with Census Bureau data and show that for children living relatively close to grandparents (up to an hour away), more than half of grandparents with grandchildren younger than 13 are providing child care of some duration every week for their grandchildren. Nearly a third of grandparents say they have changed their work schedule in order

to care for their grandchildren. Whether or not grandparents are actually providing child care to their grandchildren, most know some grandparents who provide child care to their grandchildren. The majority of grandparents believe that affordable child care is a necessity, not a choice, and that the quality of child care for families should be strengthened.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the last 40 years, grandparents have increasingly played a larger role in the daily lives of their grandchildren. A steady increase in women, particularly mothers with young children, in the workforce over the last several decades, may be part of the reason.

About 6 million grandparents are raising their grandchildren who live with them. This report is not about those grandparents, but rather, grandparents who are providing child care for their grandchildren on a regular basis every week. Both point to a strong intergenerational approach to support families, but the focus of this report is on grandparents providing child care.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 11.3 million children under age 5 with working mothers. Of those children, about 3.3 million (30 percent) are in the care of their grandparents for some period of time every week. Many older children often are cared for by their grandparents before and after school, while their parents are still at work - 12 percent or 4.7 million children between the ages of 5 and 14, are regularly in the care of their grandparents.¹

The Census Bureau has looked at children being cared for by grandparents. After examining this data, NACCRRA sought to understand more about these grandparents providing child care. NACCRRA designed a survey with Lake Research Partners to survey grandparents about the care they provide for their grandchildren, the number of hours each week they provide care, the reason they wanted to provide child care to their grandchildren, whether they were paid for their services, and whether or not they support policies to strengthen the quality of child care and/or make it more affordable. The survey was conducted by Lake Research Partners in August 2008 with 500 grandparents with grandchildren under the age of 18 years or younger participating.

KEY FINDING

GRANDPARENTS PROVIDE CRITICAL HELP WITH CHILD CARE:

- More than 8 in 10 grandparents interviewed (84 percent) had grandchildren under the age of 13, with 58 percent having grandchildren under the age of 6.
- Nearly two-thirds of the grandparents (63 percent) live within an hour from their youngest grandchild. Nearly one-third (32 percent) live in the same or almost the same neighborhood.
- The majority of grandparents (51 percent) feel that they are involved in the child care choices their children make.
- About 40 percent of grandparents, who have grandchildren under age 13 and live within an hour from them, are currently providing child care for their grandchildren while parents are at work or school. Another 19 percent have done so in the past. In total, nearly 60 percent of grandparents are either providing child care for their grandchildren or have in the past.
- Of those providing child care, over half (52 percent) provide care for less than 12 hours per week. Nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of grandparents are providing child care for their grandchildren 12-25 hours per week. About one in four grandparents (22 percent) are caring for their grandchildren for 25 or more hours each week.
- The hours of care vary from regular weekday work hours (61 percent) to weekend hours (44 percent), before or after school hours (39 percent), evening hours during the week (33 percent) and overnight or late night hours (26 percent).
- Few grandparents (less than 10 percent) care for other unrelated children while caring for their grandchildren. Even fewer grandparents (8 percent) are paid for these services.
- While the majority of grandparents are not currently providing child care to their grandchildren, the overwhelming majority (82 percent) know some grandparents who are providing such care.

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GRANDPARENTS ALSO PROVIDE OTHER CARE-RELATED SUPPORT

- Aside from providing child care on a regular basis every week, grandparents with grandchildren under age 13 (who live within an hour from them), pitch in to provide critical additional support to parents including:
 - » <u>back up care</u> when regular child care arrangements fall through (50 percent currently and 19 percent have in the past);
 - » sick care (31 percent currently and 25 percent in the past);
 - » before and after school care (27 percent currently and 17 percent in the past); and
 - » summer care (38 percent currently and 15 percent in the past).

GRANDPARENTS' BELIEFS REGARDING CHILD CARE

- More than half of grandparents (54 percent) considered child care to be a necessity and not a choice.
- Grandparents who are currently providing child care or those who have in the past are more likely to think of child care as a necessity.

GRANDPARENTS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT PUBLIC POLICIES TO STRENGTHEN CHILD CARE

- More than 9 in 10 grandparents (94 percent) support requiring training for providers including classes in child development, first aid and CPR, child guidance and discipline, and in recognizing child abuse.
- Grandparents also overwhelmingly support requiring:
 - » regular inspections of all child care programs (94 percent)
 - » setting basic standards of quality (91 percent);
 - » improving health and safety standards in child care programs (91 percent); and
 - » requiring all types of child care programs to meet basic standards of quality (87 percent).
- Three-quarters of the grandparents interviewed expressed support for policies that would provide public funding to make child care more affordable for working families.
- Two-thirds of grandparents (67 percent) are willing to pay \$10 more in taxes every year to make child care more affordable for families.



INTRODUCTION

In the last 40 years, grandparents have increasingly played a larger role in the lives of their grandchildren. Whether that has coincided with the increasing role of mothers in the workplace is not clear, but what is clear is that more grandparents are now actively involved in helping to raise their grandchildren.

For some families, this has meant a steady increase in the number of grandchildren living with their grandparents. In 1970, 2.2 million grandchildren under the age of 18 lived in a household maintained by a grandparent. By 1997, the number of grandchildren under age 18 living in a household maintained by a grandparent had increased to 3.9 million. In 2006 (the most recent data released by the U.S. Census Bureau), 5.7 million children under age 18 lived with a grandparent.

For grandparents who have already raised one generation of children, this means that about 6 million of them have embarked on raising another generation of children. This is an enormous responsibility and goes beyond the scope of child care.

In this report, NACCRRA sought to learn more about grandparents who are providing child care for their children. This is a separate issue from those 6 million grandparents who are living with their grandchildren and who are responsible for meeting their basic needs.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are about 11.3 million children under age 5 with working mothers. Of those children, about 3.3 million (30 percent) are in the care of their grandparents for some period of time every week. With nearly a third of the children of working mothers being cared for by grandparents, NACCRRA sought to learn more about grandparents providing child care.

The Census Bureau also reported that many older children often are cared for by their grandparents before and after school, while their parents are still at work - 12 percent or 4.7 million children between the ages of 5 and 14, are regularly in the care of their grandparents.

NACCRRA surveyed 500 grandparents nationwide, age 40 and older, with at least one grandchild under 18, to find out the percentage of grandparents providing child care for their grandchildren, if they were involved in child care decisions for their grandchildren, the number of hours each week they provided care, the reason they wanted to provide child care to their grandchildren, whether they were caring for unrelated children while they were caring for their grandchildren, whether they were paid for their services or whether they helped their children pay for the cost of child care the parents used, and whether or not they support policies to strengthen the quality of care and/or make child care more affordable.

While the Census Bureau looked at the number of children being cared for by grandparents, NACCRRA's survey looked at the percentage of grandparents with grandchildren who were providing child care. The survey found that more than 8 in 10 grandparents (84 percent) had grandchildren under 13 years old. Nearly 60 percent reported having grandchildren under 6 years old. A majority of the grandparents (63 percent) surveyed reported living within an hour from their youngest grandchild. In fact, nearly one-third (32 percent) reported living in the same or almost the same neighborhood. This is important because the likelihood of parents looking to grandparents to provide care increases when grandparents live close by.

NACCRRA's survey found that nearly 40 percent of grandparents with grandchildren under age 13, and who live within an hour's drive from them, are currently providing child care to their grandchildren. And, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of grandparents providing care for their grandchildren are caring for grandchildren younger than six years old.

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Over half (52 percent) are caring for their grandchildren for 12 hours or less a week. Another 24 percent are caring for their grandchildren between 12 and 25 hours a week. Only 22 percent of grandparents reported caring for their grandchildren for more than 25 hours a week.

This is interesting because the Census Bureau reports that most children under age 5 (72 percent) of working mothers have moms who are working full-time. Yet most of the care provided by grandparents is part-time. This suggests that while grandparents play a critical role in providing child care for their grandchildren, they may not be the sole arrangement for child care – at least not for parents working full-time. The Census Bureau reports that about one-quarter of the children of working mothers are in multiple child care arrangements. Grandparents are likely part of that picture.

Not surprisingly, grandparents are pitching in not only on a regular basis to help parents while they work, but also to provide backup care when other care arrangements fall through. Of those surveyed, about 50 percent of grandparents reported providing back-up child care and 31 percent reported providing care for their grandchildren who are sick.

Grandparents reported providing child care for their grandchildren for a variety of reasons. The top two were wanting to help their children because of work schedules and wanting to spend more time with their grandchildren.

Little research has been done to find out how many grandparents are involved in the day-to-day care of their grandchildren. While we know 30 percent of preschool-age children (under age 5) and 12 percent of school-age children (ages 5 to 14) are regularly in grandparent care, much less is known about how many grandparents are involved in providing care, who they are, what their perceptions are, and beliefs regarding child care.

A 2004 research brief, published by Child Trends, used data collected between 1992 and 1994 by the National Survey of Families and Households (conducted by the University of Wisconsin) to take a closer look at grandparents who live near their grandchildren under age 13. According to the brief, 47 percent of these grandparents provided child care to their grandchildren. Grandparents providing child care were most likely to have preschool-age grandchildren – 49 percent each had grandchildren under age 3 and between the age of 3 and 5, but still 46 percent had grandchildren between ages 6 and 9 and 28 percent had grandchildren between 10 and 12 years old.

But these data are more than a decade old and much has changed during that time. Therefore, NACCRRA decided to survey grandparents about child care to gain a better understanding of:

- 1. The grandparents who care for their grandchildren on a regular basis;
- 2. The types of care-related support they provide;
- 3. Their perceptions regarding child care; and,
- 4. Public policies on child care they would support.

The survey was conducted by Lake Research Partners in August 2008 with 500 grandparents with grandchildren under the age of 18. For questions that were answered by the entire sample, the margin of error is \pm 4.4 percent (for more details on the methodology, see Appendix A).

What NACCRRA learned from the survey is that the majority of grandparents (51 percent) feel that they are involved in the child care choices their children make. Many grandparents provide child care for their grandchildren or have provided such care for them in the past (nearly 60 percent), but most grandparents (82 percent) know some grandparents who are currently providing child care for their grandchildren. More than half (54 percent) believe that affordable child care is a necessity, not a choice. Nearly two-thirds (61 percent) would pay \$10 more in taxes every year to strengthen the quality of child care. And, nearly all grandparents favor public policies to support a broad range of initiatives to strengthen the quality of care.

GRANDPARENTS PROVIDE CRITICAL HELP WITH CHILD CARE

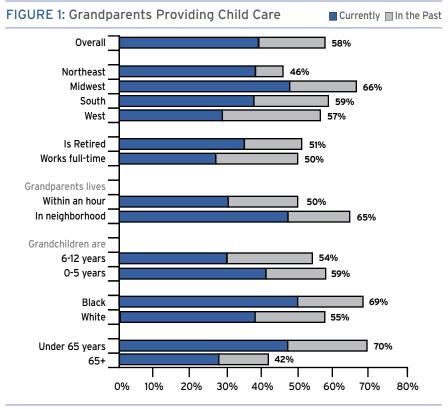
More than 8 in 10 grandparents interviewed (84 percent) had grandchildren under the age of 13 years, with 58 percent having grandchildren under the age of 6 years. Nearly two-thirds of grandparents (63 percent) live within an hour from their youngest grandchild. These grandparents, who have grandchildren under age 13 and who live within an hour away from them, are either currently providing child care to their grandchildren (39 percent) while parents are at work or school, or have done so in the past (19 percent).

Therefore, as Figure 1 shows, for grandparents living relatively close to their grandchildren, nearly 60 percent either are currently providing child care to their grandchildren or have in the past.

Also in Figure 1, grandparents living within or almost the same neighborhood as their grandchildren are more likely to be caring for them (65 percent) compared to those living within an hour (50 percent). African American or Black grandparents, however, are more likely to provide child care (69 percent) compared to their White counterparts (55 percent). Younger grandparents (under 65 years) were also more likely to provide child care (70 percent compared to 42 percent of older grandparents).

Moreover, grandparents working full-time were just as likely to be providing child care to their grandchildren (50 percent) as those who are retired (51 percent). In fact, 31 percent of grandparents said they had changed their work schedule to provide care – 46% of grandparents currently caring for grandchildren and more than half of those who had provided care in the past (55 percent) also reported changing their work schedules.

Some regional differences were also evident. Grandparents, as Figure 1 shows, in the Midwest were far more likely than their counterparts elsewhere to be providing care (66 percent) – grandparents in the Northeast (46 percent) were least likely to be providing child care to their grandchildren.



NOTE: Asked only of Grandparents with grandchildren under age 13 living with an hour's distance

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The top two reasons grandparents listed for why they were taking care of their grandchildren were to help their children while parents were working (40 percent) and to spend more time with their grandchildren (22 percent). While most grandparents were not paid for the child care services they provided, it was interesting that grandparents did not list defraying the cost of child care as one of the main reasons for providing child care for their grandchildren. (Only 14 percent of grandparents responded that this was their primary reason for caring for their grandchildren.)

Of those providing child care, over half (52 percent) provide care for less than 12 hours per week. Nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of grandparents are providing child care for their grandchildren 12-25 hours per week. About one in four grandparents (22 percent) are caring for their grandchildren for 25 or more hours each week.

The hours of care vary from regular weekday work hours (61 percent) to weekend hours (44 percent), before or after school hours (39 percent), evening hours during the week (33 percent) and overnight or late night hours (26 percent). Few grandparents are caring for other children in addition to their grandchildren (less than 10 percent). Even fewer grandparents (8 percent) are paid for these services.

When asked how many grandchildren grandparents were providing child care for, 25 percent were caring for one child, 19 percent were caring for two children, and 10 percent were caring for three or more children.

GRANDPARENTS WHO CURRENTLY PROVIDE CHILD CARE TO THEIR GRANDCHILD ARE MOST OFTEN:

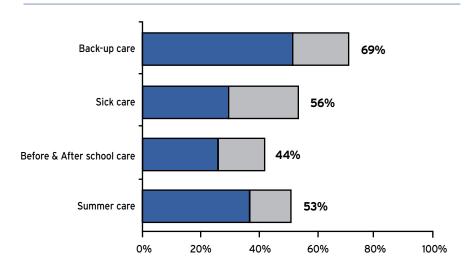
- Female (69 percent)
- Between 50 and 64 years (56 percent)
- Retired (48 percent)
- Married (74 percent)
- Have less than college education (71 percent)
- Earning under \$50,000 per year (55 percent)

GRANDPARENTS ALSO PROVIDE OTHER CARE-RELATED SUPPORT

Aside from providing regular child care, grandparents with grandchildren under age 13 (who live within an hour from their grandchildren) are often involved in providing back up care when regular child care arrangements fall through (50 percent currently and 19 percent have in the past); sick care (31 percent currently and 25 percent in the past); before and after school care (27 percent currently and 17 percent in the past); and summer care (38 percent currently and 15 percent in the past). See Figure 2 for details.



FIGURE 2: Grandparents Providing Other Types of Care



NOTE: Asked only of Grandparents with grandchildren under age 13 living with an hour's distance

■ Currently ■ In the Past

Grandparents whose youngest grandchildren are under age 6 are more likely to be currently providing back-up care (55 percent compared to 39 percent of those whose youngest grandchild is between ages 6 and 12). Grandparents with grandchildren under age 6 are also more likely to be currently providing care during the summertime (41 percent) compared to those whose youngest grandchild is between 6 and 12 years (30 percent). It is possible that grandparents tend to care for younger children during the summer because parents have access to more activities for school-age children during the summer weeks (i.e., camps, recreation centers, school-age programs, etc., may fill in somewhat in the absence of the regular school day schedule).

In addition, 82 percent of the grandparents interviewed said they knew other grandparents who help provide child care for their grandchildren. This suggests that while the majority of grandparents are not currently providing child care for their grandchildren, most know a grandparent who is providing such care.

Responses to the grandparent survey suggest that grandparents are an important part of a working family's support structure during all ages of their grandchildren's growth. They jump in to help, usually for no pay, so their children can go to work and support their families.

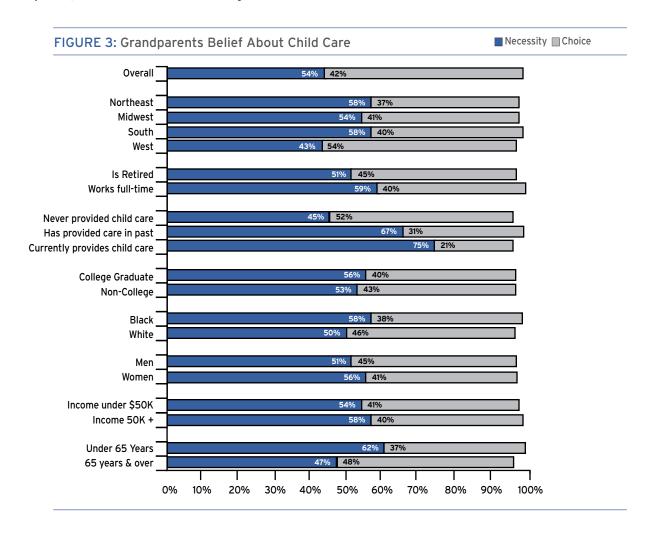
GRANDPARENTS BELIEFS REGARDING CHILD CARE

In order to assess how grandparents felt about child care, respondents were asked to select one of the two following statements:

In today's economy the reality is that both parents need to work to make ends meet. Affordable child care is a necessity, not a choice. [NECESSITY]

If more parents had different priorities and made the necessary sacrifices to live within their means, many more children would be able to have a full-time parent at home. [CHOICE]

More than half of grandparents (54 percent) considered child care to be a necessity and not a choice. Grandparents who are currently providing child care or those who have in the past are more likely to think of child care as a necessity, as Figure 3 shows. Also, more likely to think of child care as a necessity are African-American/Black grandparents, younger grandparents (those under 65 years), and those who are working full-time.

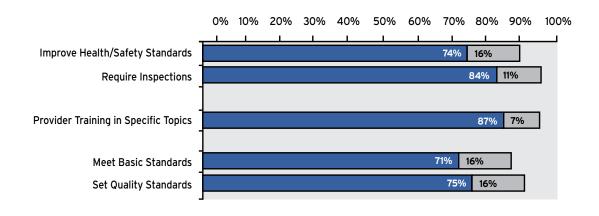


In a previous survey of parents, conducted in February 2006 with almost 600 parents with children under age 6, NACCRRA had given parents the same two statements to choose from. Slightly fewer than half of the parents (49 percent) had considered child care a necessity. This survey indicates that grandparents are slightly more likely to consider child care a necessity. It may be that more parents feel emotionally torn about leaving their children to go to work whereas grandparents know that it is hard to make ends meet today and parents have a financial responsibility to support their family.

GRANDPARENTS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT PUBLIC POLICIES TO STRENGTHEN CHILD CARE

Grandparents overwhelmingly support public policies designed to strengthen the quality of child care in the United States. More than 9 in 10 grandparents (94 percent) support requiring training for providers including classes in child development, first aid and CPR, child guidance and discipline, and in recognizing child abuse (see Figure 4). Grandparents also overwhelmingly support requiring inspections of child care programs (94 percent), setting basic standards of quality (91 percent), improving health and safety standards in child care programs (91 percent), and requiring all types of child care programs to meet basic standards of quality (87 percent).

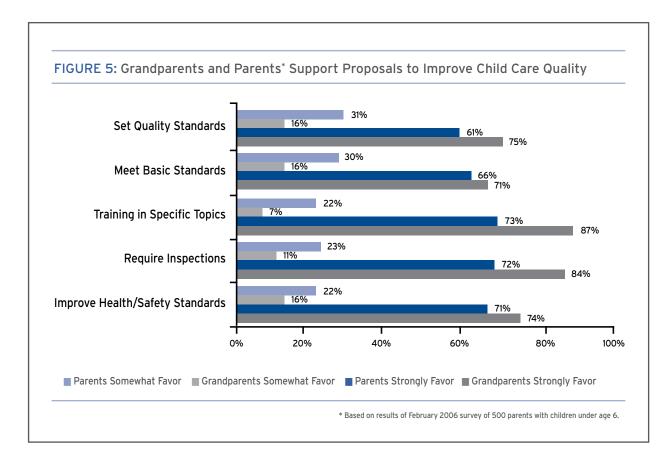
FIGURE 4: Grandparents Support Proposals to Improve Child Care Quality



■ Strongly Favor ■ Somewhat Favor

Support among grandparents for these measures is in fact higher than among parents. When NACCRRA asked this same question of parents in its 2006 survey of almost 600 parents with children under age 6, as Figure 5 shows, 73 percent of parents supported this type of training strongly compared to 87 percent of grandparents. Similarly, 84 percent of grandparents compared to 72 percent of parents strongly support requiring child care programs to be inspected; 75 percent of grandparents compared to 61 percent of parents strongly support setting quality standards for child care; and 71 percent of grandparents compared to 66 percent of parents strongly support requiring all child care programs to meet basic quality standards.





Grandparents also strongly support measures to make child care more affordable and of higher quality. Three-quarters of the grandparents interviewed expressed support for policies that would provide public funding to make child care more affordable for working families. Grandparents recognize that child care is expensive and the majority believe that both parents need to work to make ends meet.

Grandparents are willing to pay slightly higher taxes to pay for improvements in child care quality and affordability. Typically, support for a proposal tends to dropoff when people are asked if they would pay higher taxes to support the funding of such a proposal. However, this is not the case with child care funding. Almost two-thirds of grandparents (64 percent) are willing to pay \$10 more in taxes each year to improve the quality and affordability of child care. Willingness to pay higher taxes is slightly stronger among women (66 percent compared to 60 percent of men), younger grandparents (68 percent compared to 60 percent of those 65 years and older), African Americans/Blacks (85 percent compared to 58 percent of Whites), and college graduates (72 percent compared to 60 percent of those without a college degree).

It should be noted that parents as well feel strongly about providing quality child care and making child care more affordable. When NACCRRA surveyed parents in 2006, nearly 80 percent responded that they would be willing to pay \$10 more in taxes every year to strengthen the quality of child care and make child care more affordable.



CONCLUSION

Grandparents play an important role in helping their children support their own families. While about 40 percent of grandparents with grandchildren under age 13 living near them are regularly caring for their grandchildren every week, the overwhelming majority of grandparents (82 percent) know some grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren.

Nearly two-thirds of grandparents with grandchildren under age 13 live within an hour of their grandchildren. About one-third (32 percent) reported living in the same or almost the same neighborhood.

Grandparents report that the two main reasons they want to provide child care for their grandchildren are to help their children while they are at work and to spend more time with their grandchildren. It is easy to see how parents and grandparents can both benefit from grandparents who live relatively close to them.

The majority of grandparents are caring for their grandchildren for fewer than 25 hours a week. This suggests that grandparent care is part of a larger picture of potentially multiple child care arrangements, or works best for parents working part-time.

Grandparents pitch in when parents need them. Of those grandparents surveyed, 50 percent reported providing back-up child care when regular child care arrangements fell through and 31 percent reported providing care for their grandchildren who were sick.

Less than 10 percent of grandparents reported caring for unrelated children in addition to their grandchildren. And, even fewer were paid for their services. Grandparents did not, however, report defraying the cost of child care for their children as one of their top two reasons for providing child care for their grandchildren.

The majority of grandparents felt that both parents need to work to make ends meet. They see affordable child care as a necessity, not a choice.

Grandparents overwhelmingly support public policies designed to strengthen the quality of child care and most were willing to pay \$10 more in taxes to cover the cost of public funding to make child care more affordable and to improve the quality of care.

A 2006 survey of parents found similar results: parents, too, feel strongly about strengthening the quality of child care and making child care more affordable with nearly 80 percent saying that they would support an increase in their taxes of \$10 per year to cover the cost of public funding to address these concerns.

Grandparents know how important child care is - both for children and their early childhood development and for parents, who need a safe place where their children can learn while they work or attend school. Efforts to engage parents in advocating for stronger child care policies should also include grandparents, who are natural advocates for their grandchildren and who support strengthening child care policy.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

Lake Research Partners (LRP) designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 500 grandparents nationwide, ages 40 and older with a least one grandchild under the age of 18. The survey was conducted August 7-14, 2008.

Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from a random list of adults ages 40 and older. The sample was stratified geographically based on adults in each region. Data were weighted slightly by party identification, race, age, and region to reflect the attributes of the actual population. The margin of error is +/-4.4%.

In interpreting survey results, all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error; that is, the results of a survey may differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. For example, on question 5, which all respondents answered, 32% of those interviewed said their youngest grandchild lives in the same or almost the same neighborhood as they do. Therefore, we can be 95% confident that the true percentage will fall within 4.4% of this percentage, or between 27.6% and 36.4%. The table below represents the estimated sampling error for different percentage distributions of responses.

SAMPLING ERROR BY PERCENTAGE (AT 95 IN 100 CONFIDENCE LEVEL)

	Percentages								
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
800	2.1	2.8	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.2	2.8	2.0
700	2.2	3.0	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.0	2.2
600	2.4	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	2.4
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.5	2.6
400	2.9	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.5	3.9	2.9
300	3.4	4.5	5.2	5.6	5.7	5.6	5.2	4.5	3.4
200	4.2	5.6	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.6	4.2
100	5.9	7.9	9.0	9.7	9.8	9.7	9.0	7.9	5.9

ENDNOTES

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