

## iDareDream Research

Compiled by Eleanor Chappell  
Co-Founding Director



### GRANDPARENT CARER STATISTICS / INFORMATION

*Please note: If not specified, the publication date of the information below cannot be confirmed. This information was collated between 18.01.2018 and 20.01.2018. Any updated information released after 20.01.2018 will have not been documented on this worksheet unless otherwise stated.*

### NATIONAL

**Source of below information:** <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/families-policy-and-law/12-grandparents-primary-carers-their-grandchildren-policy-and>

**Information date: The below information is collected on research dated between 2003-2012**

1. In Australia, almost half of all children placed in home-based care by child protection authorities are placed with relatives or kin, mainly grandparents (Australian institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW 2012]).

2. Grandparents become primary carers of their grandchildren in one of three main ways: (a) following a parenting order made by the Family Court or Federal Circuit Court, (b) following application by the state or territory government to the Children's Court for care and protection orders that results in a court order that the child lives with his or her grandparents; and (c) through informal arrangements that may or may not have the agreement of the parents and may or may not involve the state child protection authorities.

3. How many grandparent carers are there in Australia? There is little clarity surrounding this question. Authoritative sources have put forward divergent estimates:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Family Characteristics Survey 2003 suggested approximately **22,500 grandparent families caring for 31,100 children** (ABS, 2004)

- The ABS Family Characteristics and Transitions Survey 2006-07 findings identified **14,000 such families, headed by around 23,000 grandparents** (ABS, 2008)

- Analysis of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey suggested that **27,718 children under 15 years lived in households with grandparents only** (Brandon, 2004)

4. Variations of the information above have been put down to that fact that these above surveys are not designed to capture grandparents' responsibility for grandchildren.

5. The findings in this article also acknowledged that the sample sizes may be too small to provide reliable estimates.

6. In 2006, the ABS Census of Population and Housing identified grandparent-grandchildren relationships for the first time. Analysis of Census data suggests that there were:

- **8,050 families** where grandparents were raising **grandchildren under 15 years (3,271 lone-grandparent and 4,779 couple-grandparent households).**

- **35,926 families** that included grandparents and grandchildren but in which no parent-child relationship was identified.

Survey of 335 Australia-wide grandcarers highlighted lack of communication, knowledge and access to support services.

**SURVEY FINDINGS:** (Date of survey not disclosed)

1. Out of this figure **87%** were women, **90%** born Australia or UK and **5%** identified as Indigenous Australians. No respondents from Northern Territory. Majority were home owners paying off a mortgage, while close to **one third** were renting.
2. The **335** grandparents were raising **576** grandchildren. Grandchildren were comparatively young, **majority** being **primary school age or younger**. Further **1/3** of **high school age**.
3. Dominant reasons for raising their grandchildren:

- **Two thirds** were due to **parents' substance abuse**

- Child neglect

- Parents' mental illness

- Domestic Violence

4. Often there was a combination of the above factors and grandparents were motivated to take on their grandchildren to avoid them going into foster care.

5. **3 of our 4** families had a formal arrangement for at least one of the grandchildren in their care.

Financial Disadvantage:

6. Over **70%** received incomes below national average.

7. **1/3** lived mainly on employment income.

8. Many raised additional funds by selling investments, cashing in on savings, increasing hours of employment or re-entering employment.

9. Many relied on government payments (income support, allowances, age pension)

10. **90%** received some financial assistance (usually Centrelink payment / Care Allowance provided by State/Territory Government).

11. Small number received cash support from parents.

12. **1/3** – difficulty accessing government financial assistance (admin hurdles, disrespect from staff, lack of information, complexity of intra-familial relationships).
13. **2 out of 3** were just 'getting along or feeling poor' as a direct result of raising their grandchildren.

#### Changes to Employment:

14. **2/3** had to make changes to their employment.
15. Mostly grandparents reduced their working hours / gave up work. Grandmothers usually did this as opposed to grandfathers. Loss of income and superannuation ensued = financial stress.
16. Some increased working hours, came out of retirement or struggled on = emotional and physical strain. (This included grandparents in the over 65 sub-group of the survey).

#### Changes in Employment V Age Sub Groups:

17. **Under 55's** = concerned about loss of career prospects and superannuation.
18. **55-64 years** = delayed retirement
19. **65 and over** = work longer / re-enter workforce

#### Changes to Housing:

20. **4 out of 5** = made changes to housing
21. **Over half** modified their houses or moved = financial expense / upheaval
22. **20%** wanted to change but were unable to = unsuitable accommodation
23. Housing changes were more frequent among the younger grandparents who were in a better financial situation.

#### Physical and Mental Health:

24. **Over half** reporting long-term illness or disability
25. Negative effects on physical and mental health of grandparents
26. **62%** stated health had deteriorated since taking on care of grandchildren
27. **1/4 under 55 years** old had a long-term illness or disability.
28. **Over half** of grandparents reported at least one of their grandchildren had physical problems
29. **80%** stated their grandchildren had emotional or behavioural problems
30. Abuse and abandonment by the parents were identified by the grandparents as the cause of many physical injuries and psychological problems
31. **1/3** had a grandchild with both physical and psychological problems.
32. **This highlights the need for appropriate health care supports for both grandparents and grandchildren**

#### Relationship and Social Issues:

33. **Over half** reported their friendships and community participation had deteriorated due to raising grandchildren.
34. **'Larger proportion'** said their own interests and general wellbeing had declined.
35. **Social isolation** was a strong theme
36. A **minority of grandparents relished mixing with younger parents** and participating in children's activities.

### Access to Support Groups:

37. Among support and information services for grandparent-headed families, **support groups were the most widely used by the survey sample.**
38. **2/3** belonged to support groups.
39. Feedback of support groups – **strength, wellbeing and social connections.**
40. The next most common support service available to around **30-40%** of survey families was **child care/out-of-school-hours care, caseworker support and respite.**
41. Younger grandparents found support groups unsuitable as they met during working hours and most members were older and at a different life-course stage.
42. Older grandparents expressed more need than younger respondents for support in dealing with teenagers.

### Indigenous Grandparents:

43. **5%** of respondents to survey were indigenous
44. In-depth interviews with **20** grandparents in NSW, SA and NT. Individual circumstances were diverse.
45. **50%** had formal care arrangements.
46. Many grandparents preferred to raise their grandchildren under informal agreements because of the perceived difficulties of dealing with the judicial system or fear and reluctance to contact child protection authorities.
47. Reasons for indigenous grandchildren going to live with their grandparents:
  - Most commonly due to drug or alcohol misuse
  - Other socio-emotional and financial problems of the parents (mental illness / imprisonment). Most had little or no contact with their parents, even if they were still alive.
48. Financial pressures and physical / mental health received similar response to that of grandparents within the non-indigenous sub-group.

### Cultural Continuity:

49. Almost universally, Indigenous grandparents believed that continuity and kinship knowledge was of paramount importance for them and their grandchildren.
50. Several grandparents noted the importance of being supported by their extended family.

### Perspectives of Policy Makers and Service Providers:

1. Focus groups were conducted in addition to survey and interviews
2. Focus groups held in NSW, SA, NT and ACT.
3. Key support needs identified by Policy Makers and Service Providers included:
  - Assistance with complex negotiations of family relationships across generations
  - Support to deal with complex needs of many children and young people being cared for by their grandparents and;
  - Information about changing parenting practices; and assistance with the grief and loss experienced by all generations

### Other Identified Priorities:

4. Respite
5. Crisis Support
6. Case Management
7. Financial and non-financial costs incurred by grandparents were a major issue (Non-financial costs = loss of social networks and friendships, difficulty participating in social activities etc)

Key Policy and Practice Issues:

8. More effective communication and multiple channels of information dissemination
9. Staff in government agencies to be educated more on this growing problem to assist with their response when dealing with a grandparent in this situation
10. Close the gap of payments for formal and informal grandparent carers (some do not wish to be registered as formal due to the policies surrounding this disclosure – e.g. supervision of their parenting role).
11. Basic and essential information of the child when they come into the grandparents care e.g. legal records, education and medical history.
12. Insufficient resources to maintain health and wellbeing of grandparents and grandchildren

SURVEY / INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP CONCLUSION

1. Statutory recognition of the relationship and responsibilities of grandparents and the capacity of the grandparents to maintain their caring.
2. Inadequate financial resources / significant gap for formal / informal carers
3. Recognition and support required in education and health services
4. Information services required for legal, child protection, income support, health, education systems – easily accessible, appropriate and clear.

**Source of below information:** <http://www.thepyjamafoundation.com/about-us/>

**Date information quoted from website: 20.01.2018**

*Pyjama Foundation is detailed on the Research document under Queensland.*

*Statistics refer to children in statutory care agreements across all states. (Not grandcarer specific).*

1. Statistics for children in care highlight poor literacy and numeracy levels and this is contributing to a lifetime of disadvantage.
2. Over past **10 years the number of children in out-of-home care has risen significantly with now more than 51,000 children in foster care in Australia.**
3. According to Australian Institute of Family Studies, statistics for children in formal care arrangements are as follows:
  - **92% of children are below the average reading level at age 7.** Low levels of literacy is an indicator of poor health associated with disadvantage and a higher chance of being homeless.
  - **75% of children in care do not complete 12 years of school.** This can have a negative impact on their work and educational outcomes.
  - **35% of children in care are entering the juvenile justice system.**
4. According to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011, poor literacy is often repeated from one generation to the next, which creates chronic disadvantage within families and communities.

5. More often than not further support is required to meet the literacy and educational needs of children in care.

**Source of below information:** <https://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CREATE-Foundation-Annual-Review-2017-LR.pdf>

**Date information quoted from website: 20.01.2018**

*CREATE Foundation is detailed on the Research document under NATIONAL.*

*This information was extracted from CREATE Foundation 2017 Annual Review.*

*Please refer to pages 6-9 of the document for Tables / Figures relating to statistics.*

*Figures reflect children in statutory care agreements across all states (not grandcarer specific)*

1. As of **June 30.06.2016** (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) the number of **children in care = 46,488**. This is a **7.1% increase** from 2016.
2. **Of the 46,488** children in care:
  - **94%** were in home based care
  - **5.8%** were in residential care
  - **0.6%** were in other types of care arrangements
3. **Of the 94%** in home based care:
  - **39%** were in foster care
  - **49%** were in relative / kinship care
  - **5%** were in a third party / parental care
  - **1%** were in other types of home based care
4. When broken down into jurisdictions the figures in each category varied. For example children in foster care in Victoria represented 16% whereas children in care in Queensland represented 49%.
5. **Most of the relative / kinship placements were with grandparents – 48%**
6. **52%** of foster households had more than one child.
7. **40%** of relative / kinship households had more than one child.
8. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 7 times more likely** to receive a child protection service than their non-indigenous peers.

**Source of below information:** [The Raising Children Network](#)

**Date information quoted from website: 19.01.2018**

**Date information quoted from the Source: Unknown / Not stated**

1. **22,500** Families in Australia are grandparents raising grandchildren

#### OTHER INFORMATION DOCUMENTED FROM GENERIC WEBSITE RESEARCH:

1. Tasmanian authorities have highlighted the following in terms of grandparents taking on full time care of their grandchildren:
  - Respite Support is required
  - IT training for Grandparents (they have considered vouchers for external IT training)
  - There is a serious lack of affordable care, especially for grandchildren with special conditions (detachment and emotional distress disorders)
  - *“There is a real lack of evidence as to what’s impacting on them and what is really the key issues in their lives”.*

**Please bear in mind any figures stated above do not necessarily reflect or include at all grandparents with informal care arrangements. Therefore the true figure will be higher for this sub-group.**