

Multigenerational Households Are Increasing

Growth of multigenerational households has accelerated during the economic downturn. In 2008, 6.2 million intergenerational households resided in the United States (5.3% of all households.) That number jumped to 7.1 million households by 2010 (6.1% of all households.) The increase in these two years represents a faster rate of growth than the previous eight years combined.

What Is a Multigenerational Household?

This analysis defines multigenerational household as one in which the “householder” lives in any of the following combinations:

- Householder, child, and grandchild
- Householder with parent
- Householder with parent and child
- Householder with grandchild
- Householder with parent, child, and grandchild
- Householder with parent and grandchild

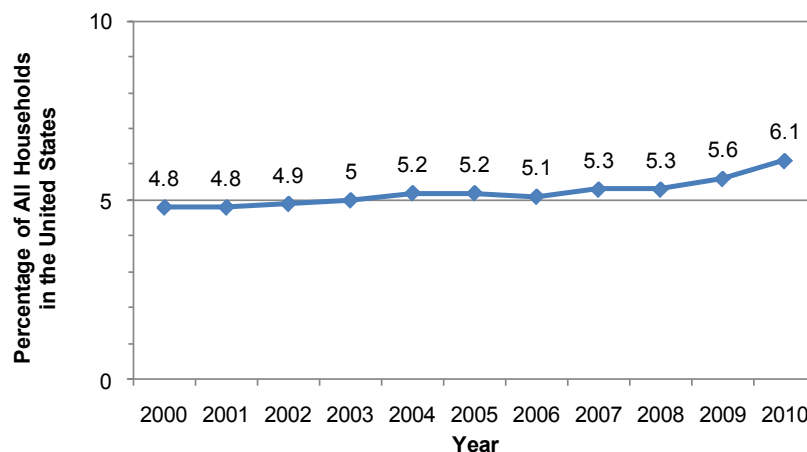
It does not include households comprised of parents and children, regardless of the age of the child. Data are derived from the Current Population Survey.¹

How Have Multigenerational Households Grown over the Past Decade?

Growth of multigenerational households has accelerated in the economic downturn. In 2000, there were 5 million households comprised of multiple generations (4.8% of all households.) This number grew slowly until the last two years. By 2008, 6.2 million intergenerational households resided in the United States (5.3% of all households), jumping to 7.1 million such households in 2010 (6.1% of all households).

Figure 1 illustrates the growth in multigenerational households over the past decade. Between 2008 and 2010, the number of multigenerational households grew faster than in any other

Figure 1
Multigenerational Households as a Percentage of All Households in the United States, 2000–2010



Source: AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey Data.

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two-year period since 2000. This timing largely coincides with the recession during the late 2000s.

How Prevalent Are the Various Configurations of Multigenerational Households?

Figure 2 illustrates the prevalence of the different types of multigenerational households.

Other Findings

A separate analysis conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2010 analyzed the number of Americans living in multigenerational households.² That report defined multigenerational family households as including—

- Two generations: parents and adult children ages 25 or older
- Three generations: parents, adult children, grandchildren
- Skipped generation: grandparents and grandchildren, without parents
- More than three generations

The Pew analysis found that in 2008, 49 million Americans (16% of the U.S. population) lived in multigenerational households—up from

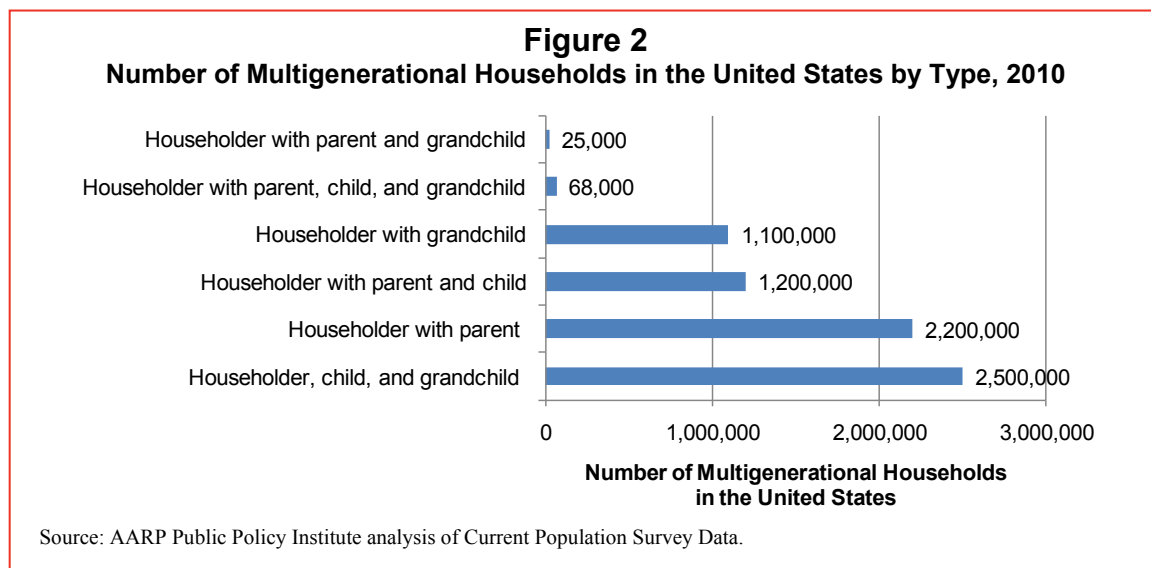
28 million (12%) in 1980. Coincident with rising unemployment and home foreclosures, there was a 2.6 million increase in the number of individuals in multigenerational households between 2007 and 2008.

“Boomerang” Children, Elders, and Race/Ethnicity

According to the Pew report, one in five adults ages 25 to 34 now live in multigenerational households. This is a dramatic reversal since 1980, when only 11 percent of this age group lived in multigenerational households. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the impact of the recession.

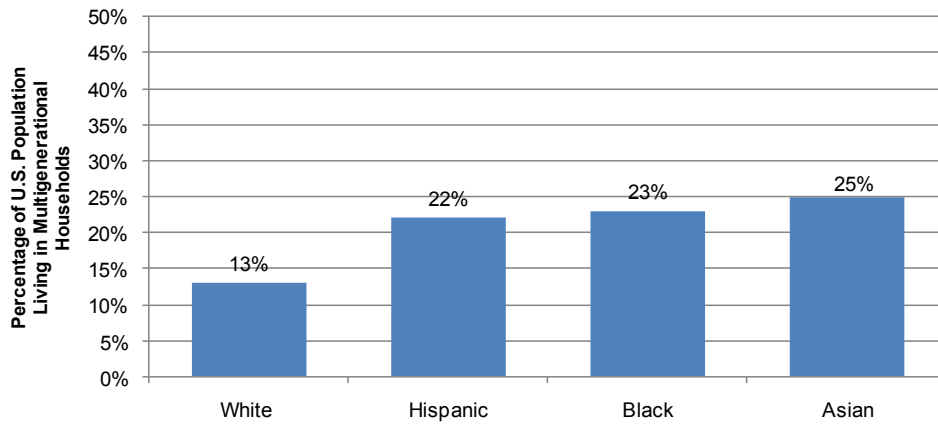
Twenty percent of adults age 65+ lived in multigenerational households in 2008. Over the course of the twentieth century, the percentage of people age 65+ living in multigenerational households declined dramatically, from 57 percent in 1900 to 17 percent in 1990. Since then, the percentage has begun to increase.

A substantially higher share of Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians live in multigenerational households, compared to whites. This finding is illustrated in figure 3.



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Figure 3
Percentage of U.S. Population Living in Multigenerational Households, by Race or Ethnicity



Source: Paul Taylor et al., *The Return of the Multi-generational Household*.

Conclusion

For some multigenerational households, shared living space is a choice that enhances familial closeness and bonding across the generations. For others, it is based on economic necessity, disability of a parent or adult child, or the absence or incapacity of the parent of a minor child. In the latter cases, family relationships may be strained by crowded living quarters, excessive caregiving responsibilities, and economic hardship. Public policies should support family caregivers who live in multigenerational households by facilitating access to public programs and expanding the availability of supportive services.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey Internet and Computer Use Supplement Public Use File.

² Paul Taylor et al. *The Return of the Multi-generational Household* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, March 2010).

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