According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 10% of all children under the age of 18 live with a grandparent. This equals approximately 4.2 million households, or 3%, in America. Two-thirds of those households were headed by a grandparent; a third were headed by either one or two parents living in the same household. Approximately 2.7 million grandparents have primary responsibility for their grandchildren under 18 years of age.[1]

Grandparents assume responsibility for their grandchildren for a variety of reasons, including parental substance abuse, incarceration, mental or physical illness, abandonment, divorce, or death.[2] Research has found that the risks for children who are cared for primarily by grandparents vary by the types and levels of support and access to resources. These risks include poverty, access to medical care, and housing stability.[3]

Geographic patterns of children living in grandparent-headed households exist. The Census Bureau surveyed counties all over the country and found that counties in the Midwest and upper Northeast generally had the lowest percentage of grandparent-headed homes. Counties in the South and Southwest had the highest percentages.[1]

Below you can see how Illinois counties look when considering the number and percent of children under age 6 who live in a grandparent-headed household. For more detailed information on this topic, visit the IECAM risk factor page on grandparent-headed households at http://go.illinois.edu/IECAMgrand

IECAM provides a comprehensive picture of early care and education services in Illinois by combining demographic data (population, language use, poverty level, risk factors) and early childhood program data (Preschool for All, Head Start, child care).

Spotlight on Stats is a periodic data resource that will highlight particular demographic data (e.g., languages, risk factors, population characteristics) on the state as a whole.

