

A photograph of a multi-generational African American family celebrating a birthday. A young girl is holding a rectangular white cake with colorful candles and balloons. She is smiling and looking at the cake. An older woman with short white hair is sitting next to her, also smiling and looking at the cake. A young boy is sitting in front of the older woman, looking at the cake. A man is sitting behind the boy, smiling. A woman is sitting to the left of the boy, smiling. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting.

2018 GRANDPARENTS TODAY NATIONAL SURVEY

African American/Black Grandparents



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Grandparents Today	6
The Role of the Grandparent	10
Cultural Shifts	17
Grandparents Connecting	20
Health Impact / Outcomes	27
Appendix: Sample Profile	31
Methodology	35
Contact	42



Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the African American/Black (AA/B) grandparent population of the United States. The results highlight the richness of this community and the value they play in the lives of their grandchildren, while also indicating some poignant barriers.

African American/Black grandparents become grandparents younger and have a larger number of grandchildren than the general population.

- The average age of the first-time African American/Black grandparent is 46 years old, which is significantly younger than the general population (50 years old), while the average number of grandchildren is 5.5, higher than the general population (4.5).

Many AA/B grandparents view finances as a grandparent challenging. Though they provide financial support, their spend is generally lower than the overall grandparent population.

- In 2017, the median AA/B household income was \$40,258.¹ Similarly, a third of AA/B grandparents have an annual household income of less than \$40,000 (compared to 22 percent of the general population).
- African American/Black grandparents are less likely to be in a high income household (\$75,000+) than the general population (29% vs. 44%).
- AA/B grandparents spend an average of \$1,880 annually on their grandchildren (compared to \$2,562 spent by the general population) totaling \$17 billion per year.
- They are more likely to feel the financial burden of being a grandparent: One in five state that their financial status is a barrier to seeing more of their grandchildren.

Executive Summary (cont.)

African American/Black grandparents care deeply about their grandchildren's future and actively ensure their grandchildren have the best chances of success in life.

- African American/Black grandparents are a source of heritage and wisdom, while virtually all have strong connections to cultural roots (97%).
- They are more likely to be in hands-on roles in the upbringing of grandchildren (e.g., discipline, mentoring, and financial support) and significantly more likely to be a primary caregiver than the general population (31% vs. 5%).
- They are more comfortable discussing issues with their grandchildren than the general population (90% vs. 84%). In particular, African American/Black grandparents place importance on discussing racism with grandchildren (50%, 21 percentage points higher than the general population) and spirituality (52% AA/B vs 33% general population).
- They champion the importance of academic achievement for their grandchildren, with one in five putting a significant amount of money towards their grandchildren's school/college tuition.

African American/Black grandparents have mixed views of societal changes and a traditional parenting style.

- In some respects, African American/Black grandparents have a modern outlook — like the general population, they are progressive in their attitudes to the LGBT community and eight in ten have a positive relationship with the parents from another race, significantly higher than the general population (68%).
- On the flip side, they are less likely than the general population to support boys and girls being raised the same way (55% vs. 62%).
- Similar to all grandparents, they view their parenting to be superior to the current generation, and African American/Black grandparents are strong supporters of spanking as a form of discipline (67%).

Executive Summary (cont.)

While distance and busy schedules are a challenge, African American/ Black grandparents are finding ways to spend time with and to connect with their grandchildren.

- Distance is the biggest barrier to seeing grandchildren. Almost half of AA/B grandparents have at least one grandchild who lives more than 200 miles away, and about a third live over 50 miles from their closest grandchild.
- About four in ten AA/B grandparents today are in the workforce. Their busy schedules as well as the schedules of their children and grandchildren are the #2 barrier in spending time with their grandchildren.
- These challenges are being overcome with increased technological savvy, more in-person opportunities with grandchildren, plus travel, with “skip gen” travel being experienced by close to half of AA/B grandparents.
- AA/B grandparents seek additional information about connecting with their grandchildren and staying a relevant part of their lives. AA/B grandparents welcome online media sources for grandparenting information, although traditional media and in-person opportunities remains relevant.

African American/Black grandparents are reaping the positive health impact of grandparenting.

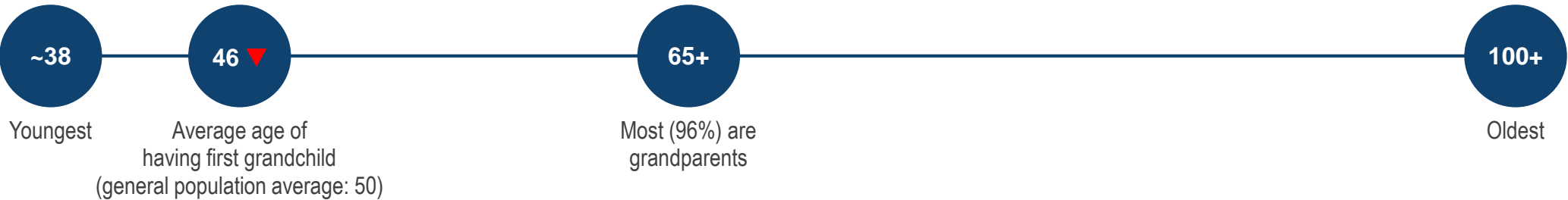
- African American/Black grandparents are more likely than the General Population to say that the role makes them more sociable (75%) and physically active (74%).
- Only a small proportion are very lonely (5%) or isolated (9%) - likely attributed to their hobbies, interests and high engagement with grandchildren - and in turn, this is positively impacting their grandparenting performance.



GRANDPARENTS TODAY

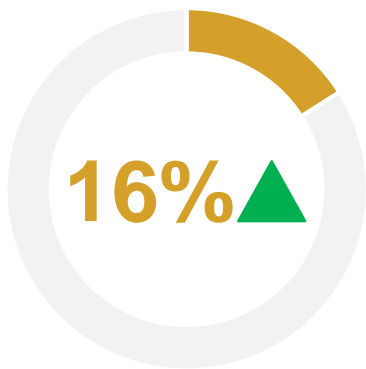
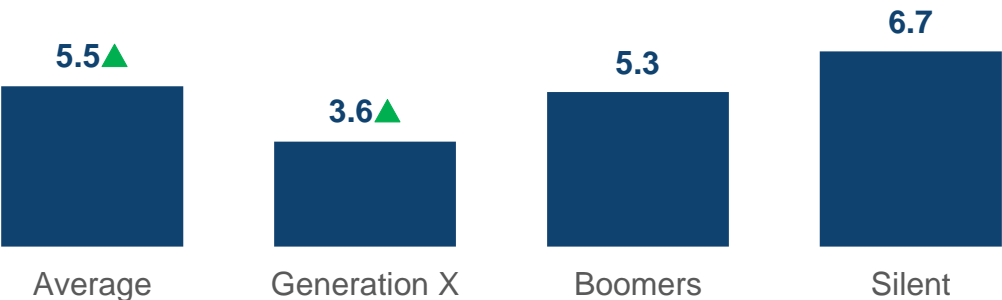
African American/Black grandparents start their new role at a younger age compared to the general population.

Compared to the general population, they also have more grandchildren and are more likely to be living with them.



On average, they have 5 to 6 grandchildren.

(General population average: 4.5)

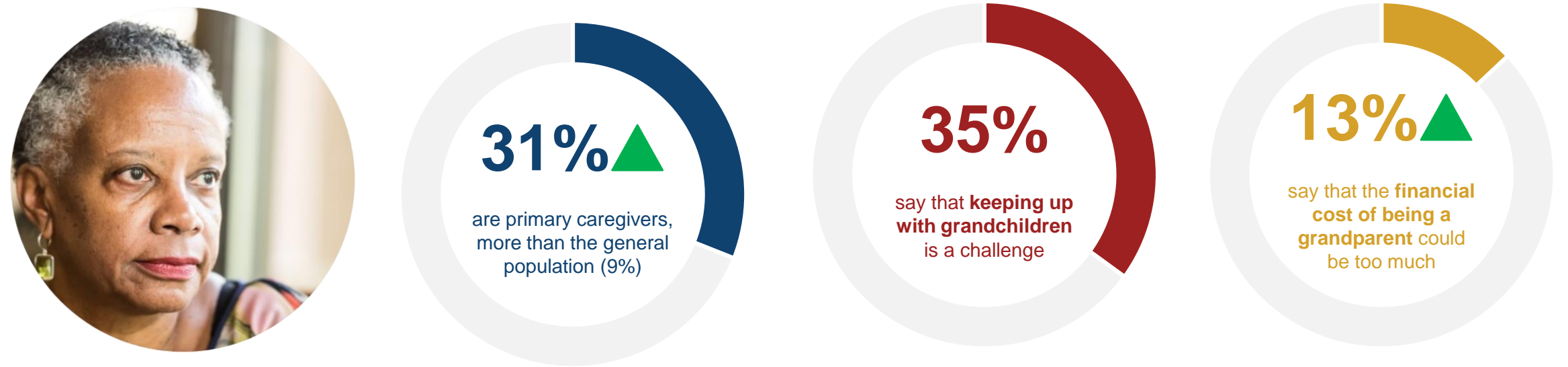


have a **grandchild living with them**, more than the general population (11%).

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level ▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

African American/Black grandparents with a grandchild in the home are more likely to be primary caregivers.

Compared to the general population, they are more likely to be financial supporters of their grandchildren and experience more financial strain in the grandparent role.



Base: Total Black / African American grandparents (n=627) Q47: Which of the following challenges, as a grandparent, do you face?

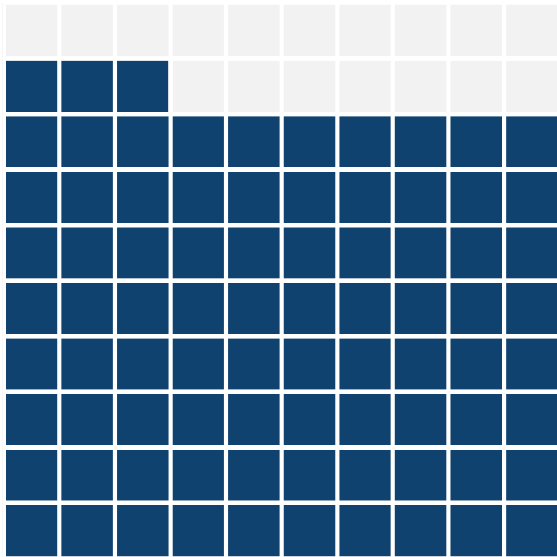
Base: Black / African American grandparents who live with grandchildren's parents (n=73)

How many of the grandchildren living with you are you the primary caregiver-meaning you are either the legal guardian of the grandchild or solely responsible for the grandchildren's care?

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

Although traditional nicknames dominate, African American/Black grandfathers are more willing to adopt modern nicknames.

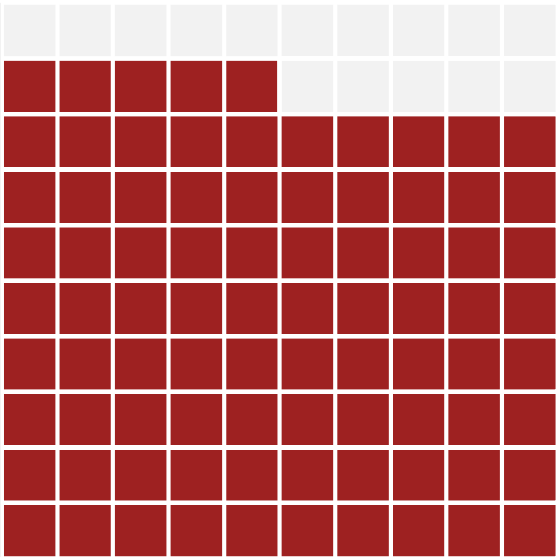
83% of grandmothers are called some form of "grandma"



2%

want to be called a modern name

85% of grandfathers are called some form of "grandpa"



11%

want to be called a modern name



Base: AA/B Grandmothers (n=215), AA/B Grandfathers (n=92)
Q33: What do(es) your grandchildren call you?

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level



THE ROLE OF THE GRANDPARENT

African American/Black grandparents are highly engaged with their families.

87%▲

of African American/Black grandparents say **they play an important role in their grandchildren's lives**, more than the general population (81%).



Base: Total Black / African American grandparents (n=627)

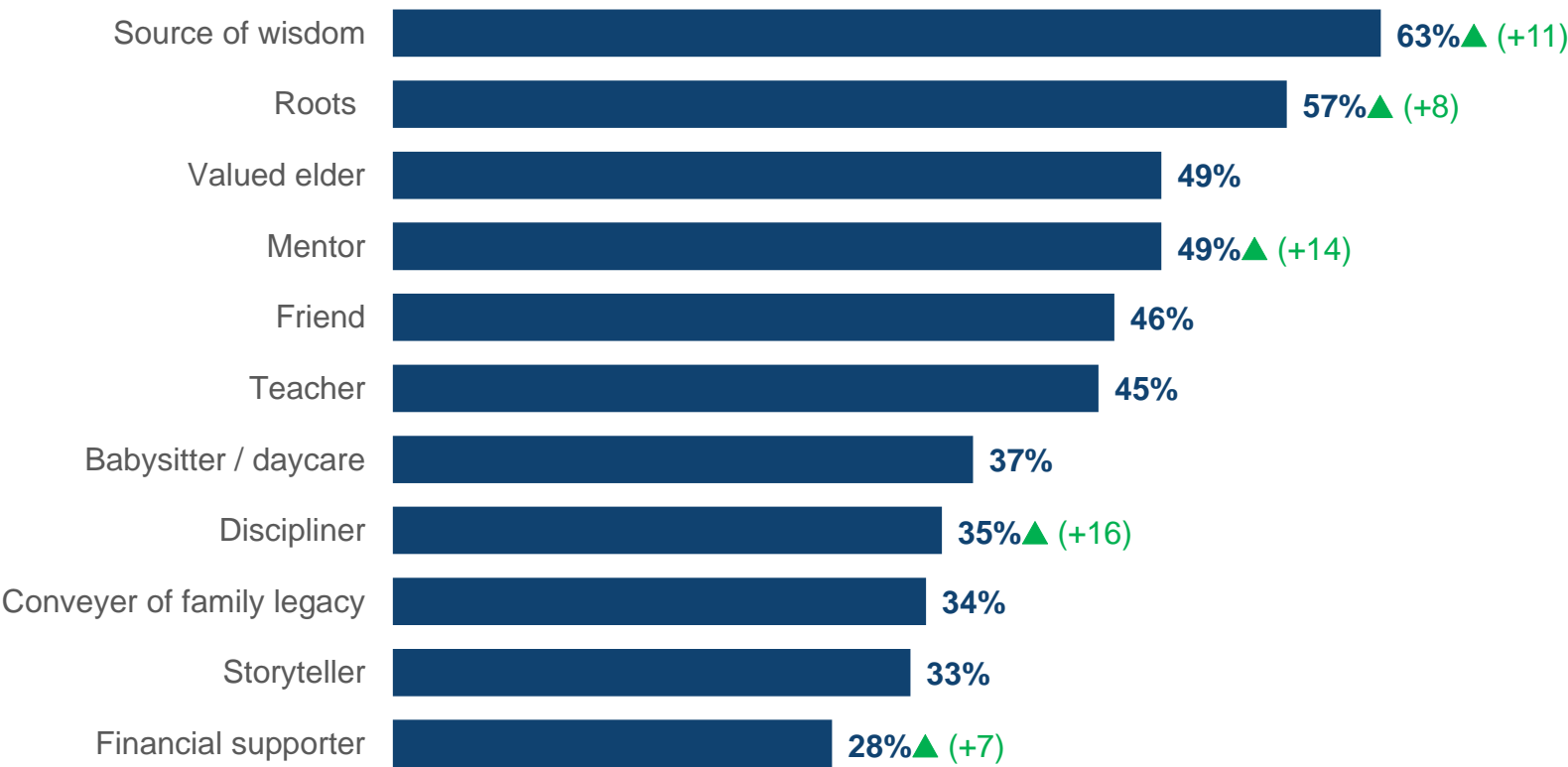
Q61: Overall, how important of a role do you think you play in your grandchild/children's lives?

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level

▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

African American/Black grandparents play an all-encompassing role in their grandchildren's lives.

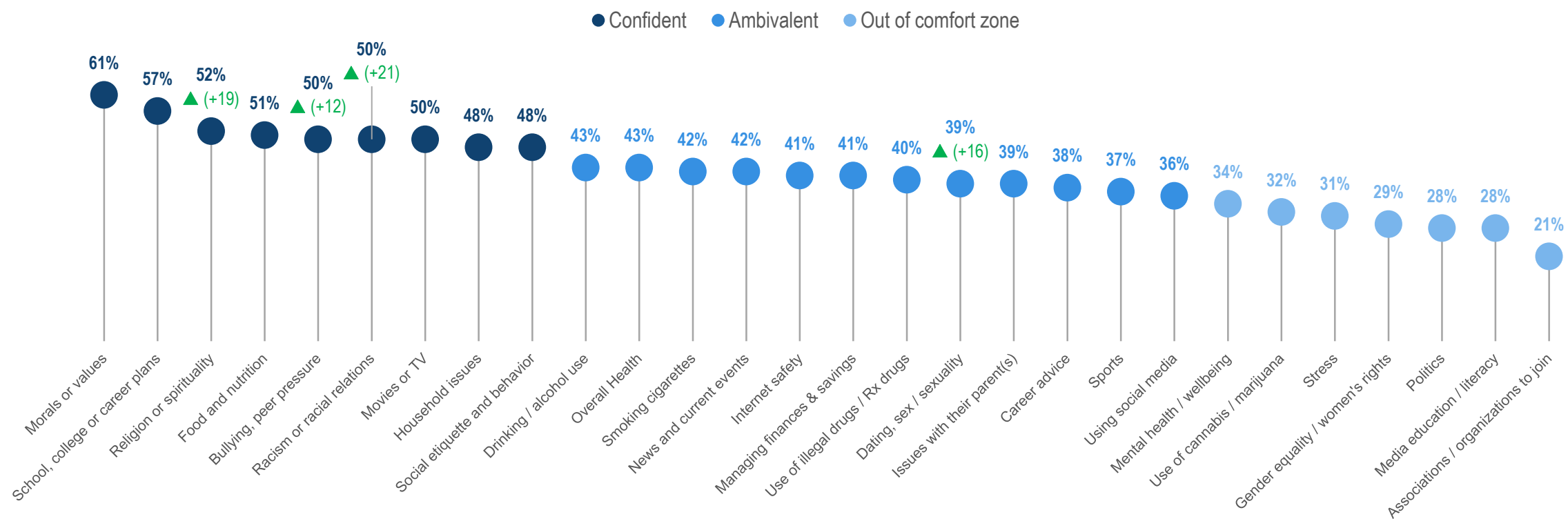
Aside from being a source of wisdom and roots, they are actively involved in key aspects of their grandchildren's upbringings.



Base: AA/B Grandparents Answered (n=320)
Q32: Below is a list of roles that grandparents may (or may not) play in grandchildren's lives.
Please select all roles that you identify with, as a grandparent.

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

African American/Black grandparents are comfortable discussing sensitive topics such as racism and religion/spirituality.



African American/Black grandparents are a lot more comfortable to discuss at least one of the above subjects compared to the general population ▲ (90% vs. 84%)

Base: Total Black / African American grandparents (n=627)
Q40: Which of the following topic areas are you comfortable giving advice or talking to your grandchildren about ...?

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

Education of their grandchildren is a high priority.

75%▲

of African American/Black grandparents think it is **Important for their grandchildren to get a higher education**, more than the general population (62%).



Base: Total Black / African American grandparents (n=627)

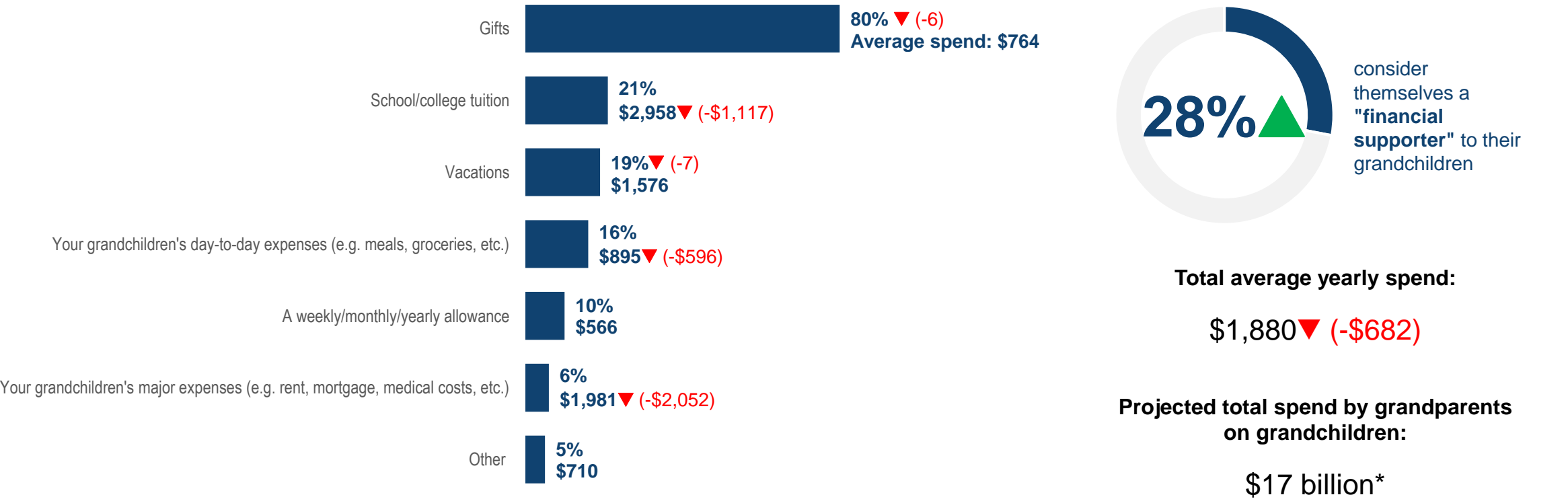
Q45: Below is a list of modern parenting topics (you may OR may not be aware of). Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each point?

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level

▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

Many consider themselves a financial supporter of their grandchildren.

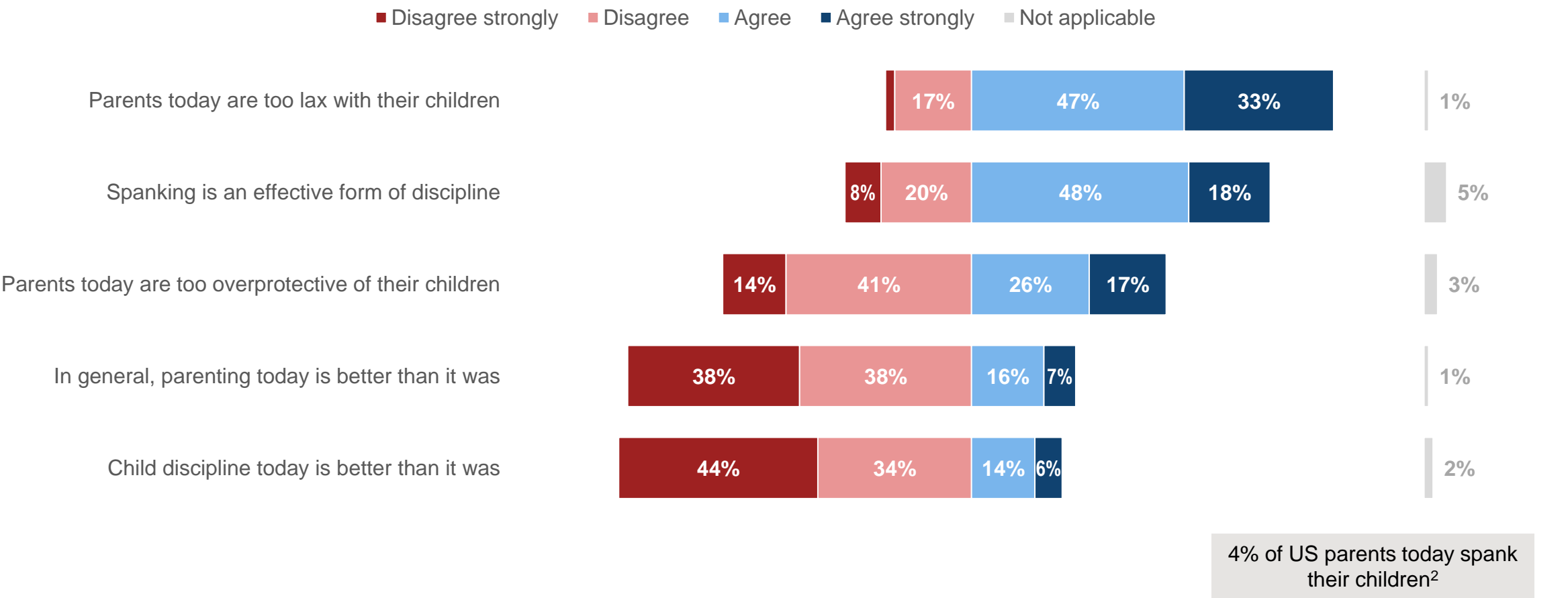
Most African American/Black grandparents buy their grandchildren gifts, but one in four are spending on important cost-of-living expenses such as allowances and groceries.



Base: Total Black / African American grandparents (n=627); Q30: Which of the following, if any, do you spend your money on for your grandchildren?
Base: Total AA/B spent mean (n=627); Q31: In a given year, how much do you think you spend on your grandchildren?
*Total spend = \$1,880 x ~9,100,000

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

AA/B grandparents view their parenting as superior to the next generation and do not feel today's parenting is as good as theirs.



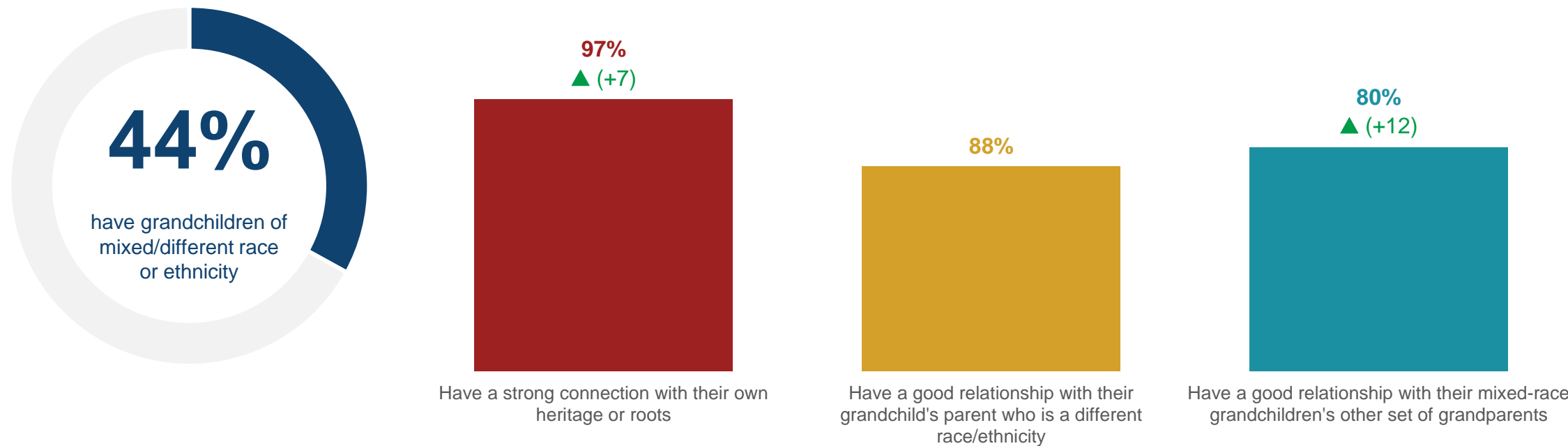
Base: Total AA/B grandparents (n=627)
Q45: Below is a list of modern parenting topics (you may OR may not be aware of). Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each point?
▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level



CULTURAL SHIFTS

African American/Black grandparents in multicultural families successfully balance promoting their heritage with embracing new family members from other backgrounds.

Of the grandparents who have grandchildren of mixed/different race or ethnicity...

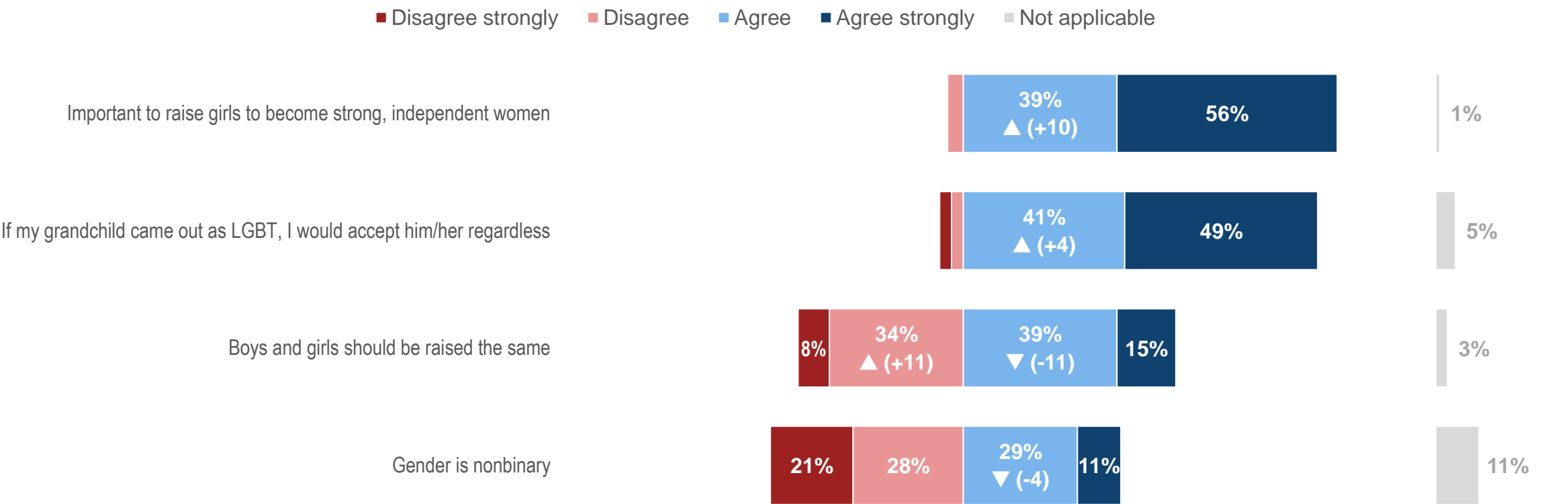


Base: Total Black / African American grandparents (n=627); Q50: Are any of your grandchildren...
Base: AA/B Grandparents whose grandchildren are of different race/ethnicity (n=233)
Q51: How strong is your connection to your own cultural, racial, or ethnic heritage or roots?

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

AA/B grandparents value raising girls to be strong, independent women.

Though African American/Black grandparents value raising girls to be strong, independent women, they are more fixed in their views of gender and the upbringing of girls and boys.



Base: Total African American/Black grandparents (n=627)

Q45: Below is a list of modern parenting topics (you may OR may not be aware of). Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each point.

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level

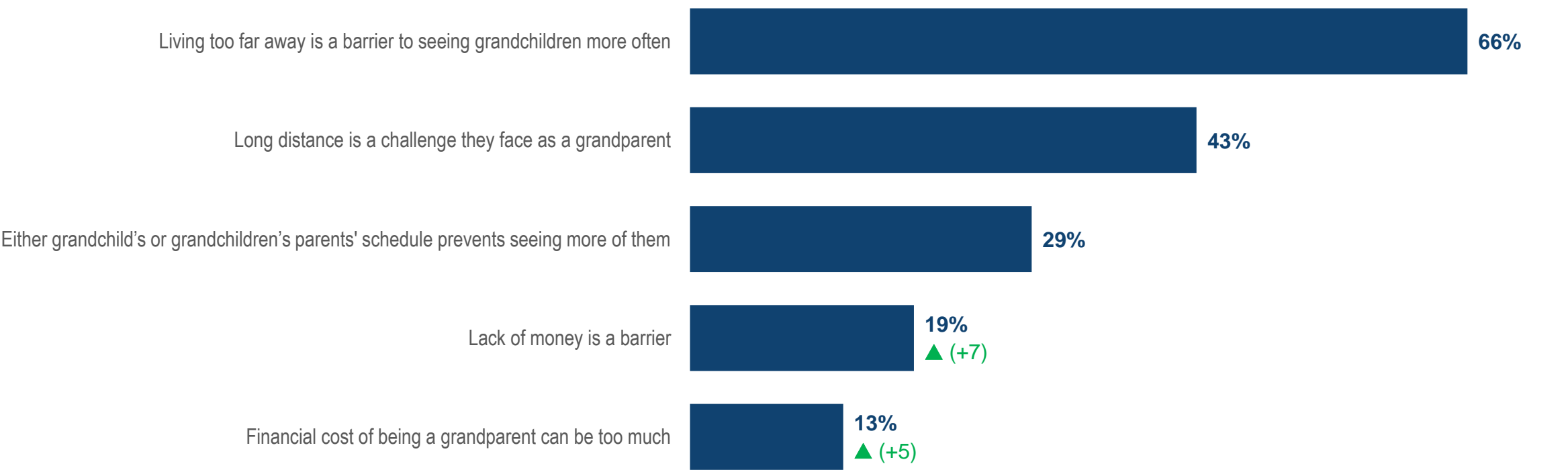
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level



GRANDPARENTS CONNECTING

The biggest challenge for African American/Black grandparents is distance from grandchildren.

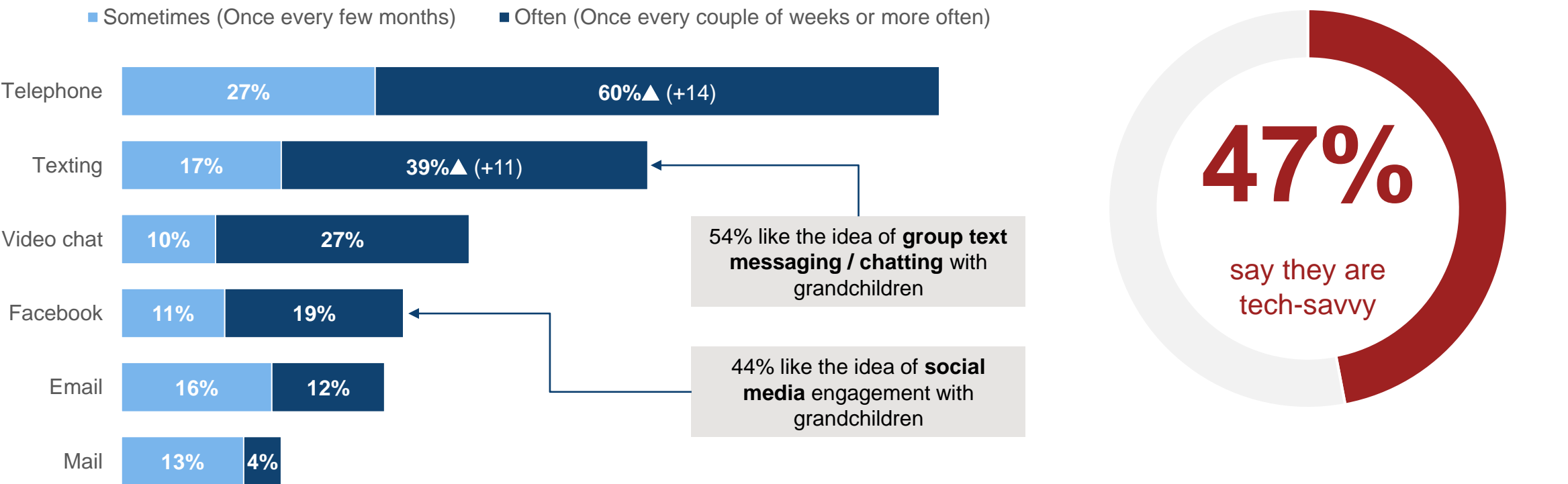
However, in comparison to the general population, some have more issues surrounding financial constraints and taking on financial burdens as a grandparent.



Base: AA/B Grandparents who do not see grandchildren often enough (n=342)
Q29: Which of the following reasons prevent you from seeing your grandchildren more often?
Base: Total AA/B grandparents (n=627); Q47: Which of the following challenges, as a grandparent, do you face?
▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

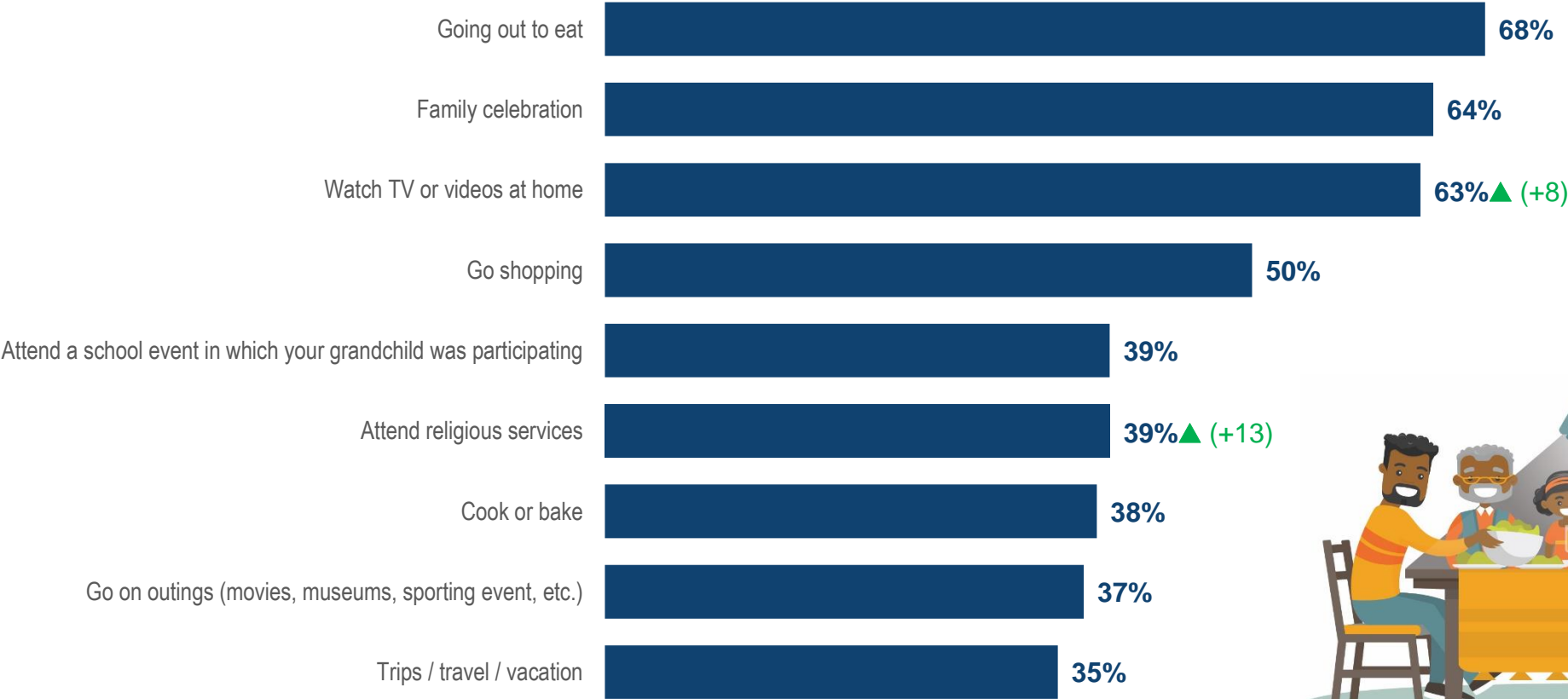
African American/Black grandparents phone and text grandchildren more frequently than the general population does.

While two in three African American/Black grandparents like the idea of video chatting with grandchildren, over half do not use the technology. They also show a similarly significant gap between interest and use for texting and social media tools to connect with grandkids.



Base: AA/B grandparents who do not live with grandchildren (n=600)
Q39: In general, how often do you communicate with your grandchildren using the following...?
▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

Intergenerational activities among African American/Black grandparents revolve around home or community activities.

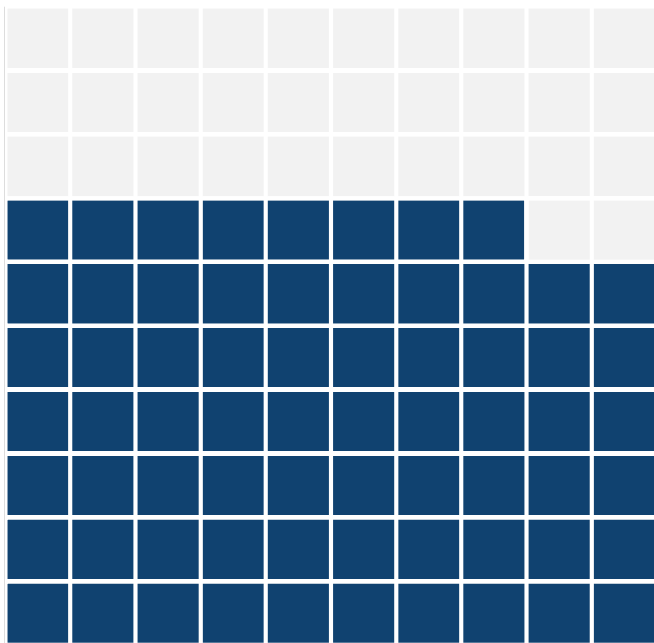


Base: Total African American / Black grandparents (n=627)
Q34: Have you done any of the following activities with your grandchildren in the past 12 months? Please select all that apply..

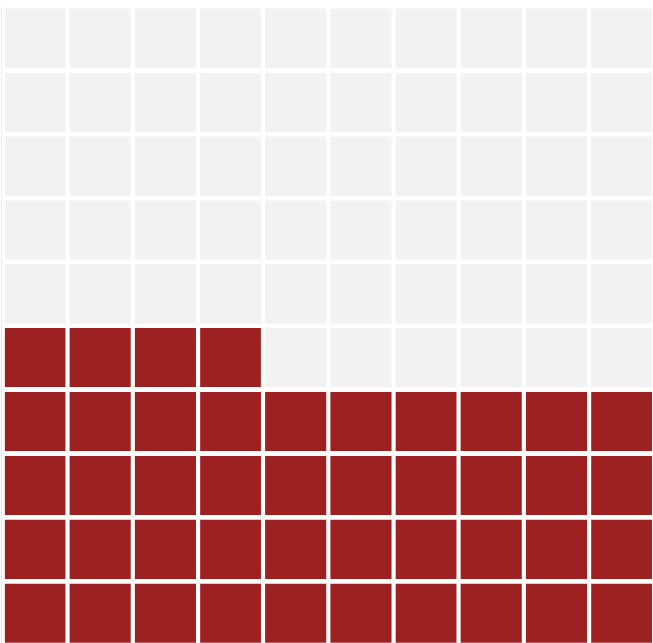
▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

African American/Black grandparents are more interested in skip-gen travel than the general population.

While **68%▲** (+7) are interested in traveling alone with their grandchildren...



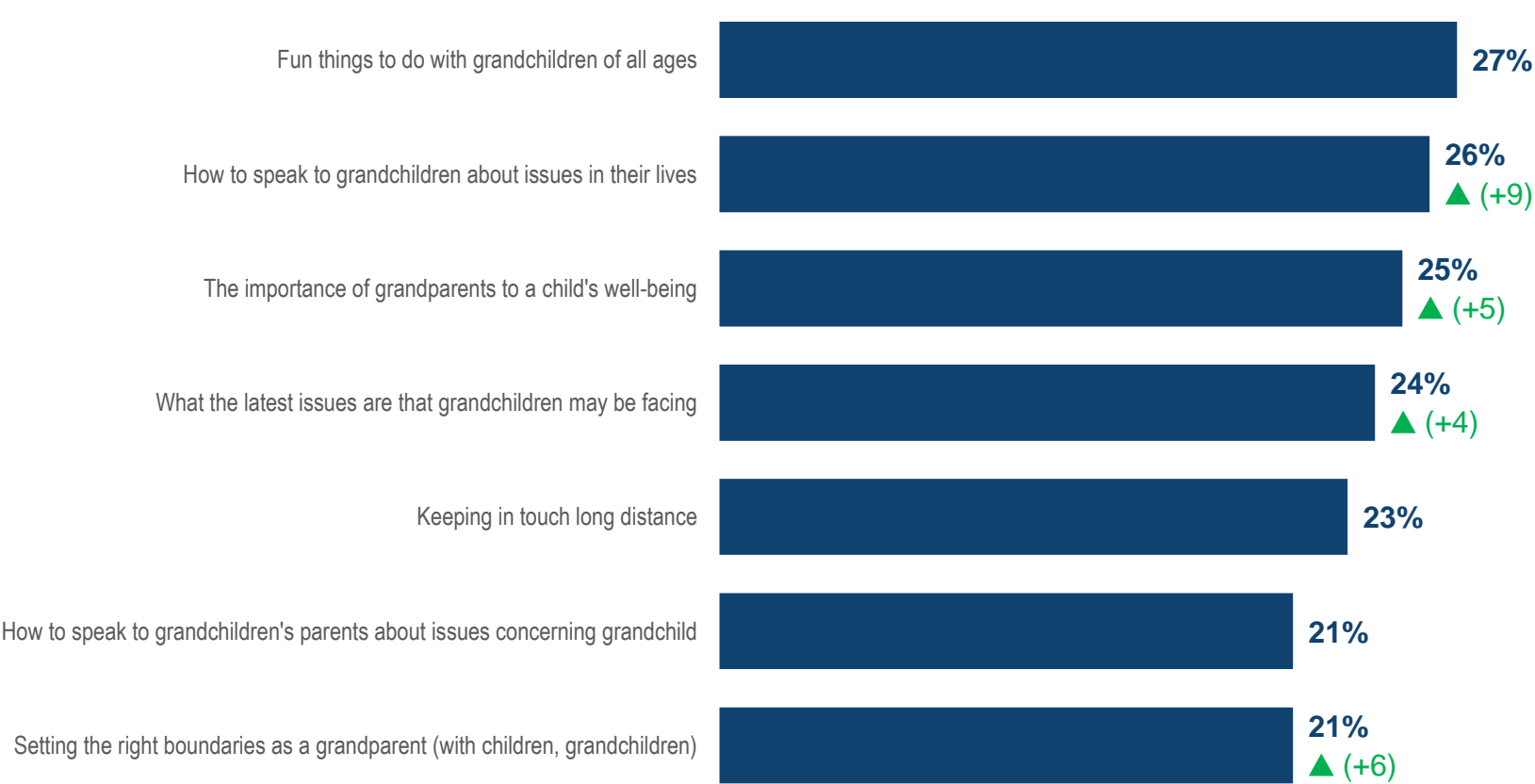
...only **44%▲** (+12) have taken their grandchildren on a skip-gen trip



Base: Total African American / Black grandparents (n=627)
Q37: How likely, if at all, are you to take a multigenerational trip in the next 12 months?
Q38: Have you ever paid for and taken a trip with your grandchildren without their parents (i.e., their mom and dad stay at home).
Q46: Below is a list of new ideas for grandparenting that you may OR may not have heard of. For each, please indicate if you like OR dislike each idea, by selecting the thumbs up for "like," thumbs sideways for "neutral" and thumbs down for "dislike."

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

Aside from intergenerational activities, African American/Black grandparents seek information on how to discuss life issues.

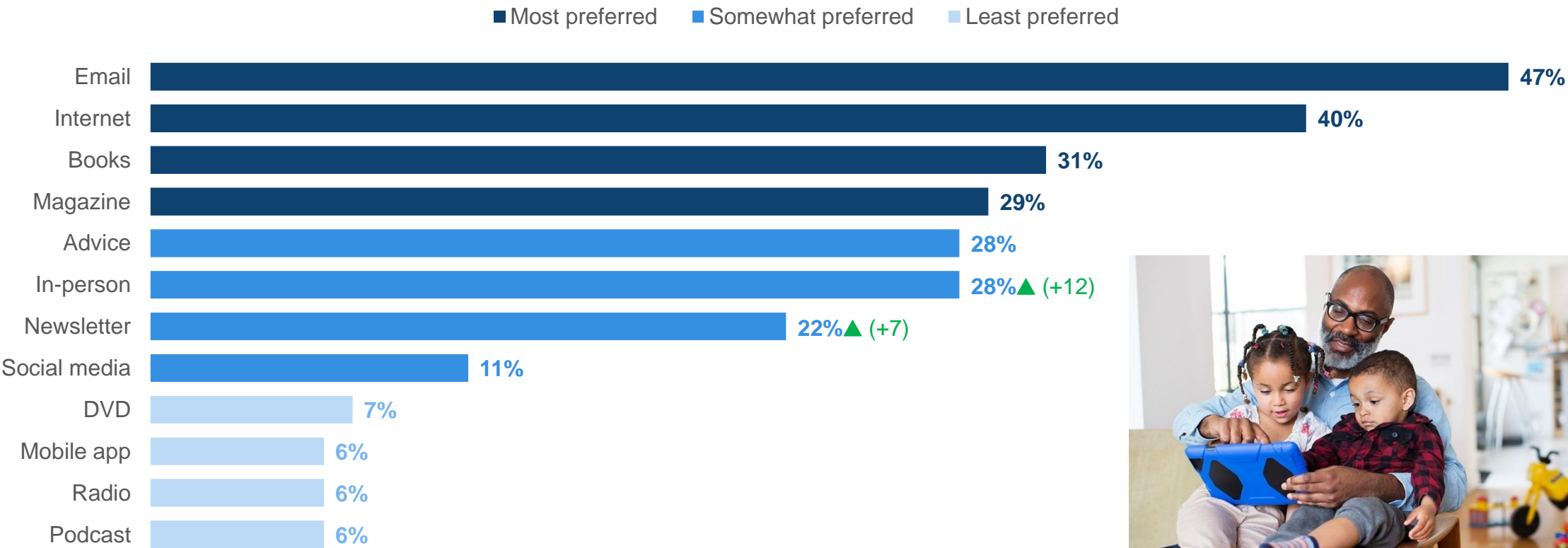


Base: Total African American / Black grandparents (n=627)
Q48: Which of the following topics would you like more information on as it relates to your role as a grandparent? Select all that apply.

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

AA/B grandparents welcome online media sources for grandparenting information, in addition to traditional media.

However, African American/Black grandparents show a higher preference for in-person meetings than the general population.



Base: AA/B grandparents who need any information (n=436)
Q49: What is your preferred method of receiving information (on grandparenting)? Select all that apply.

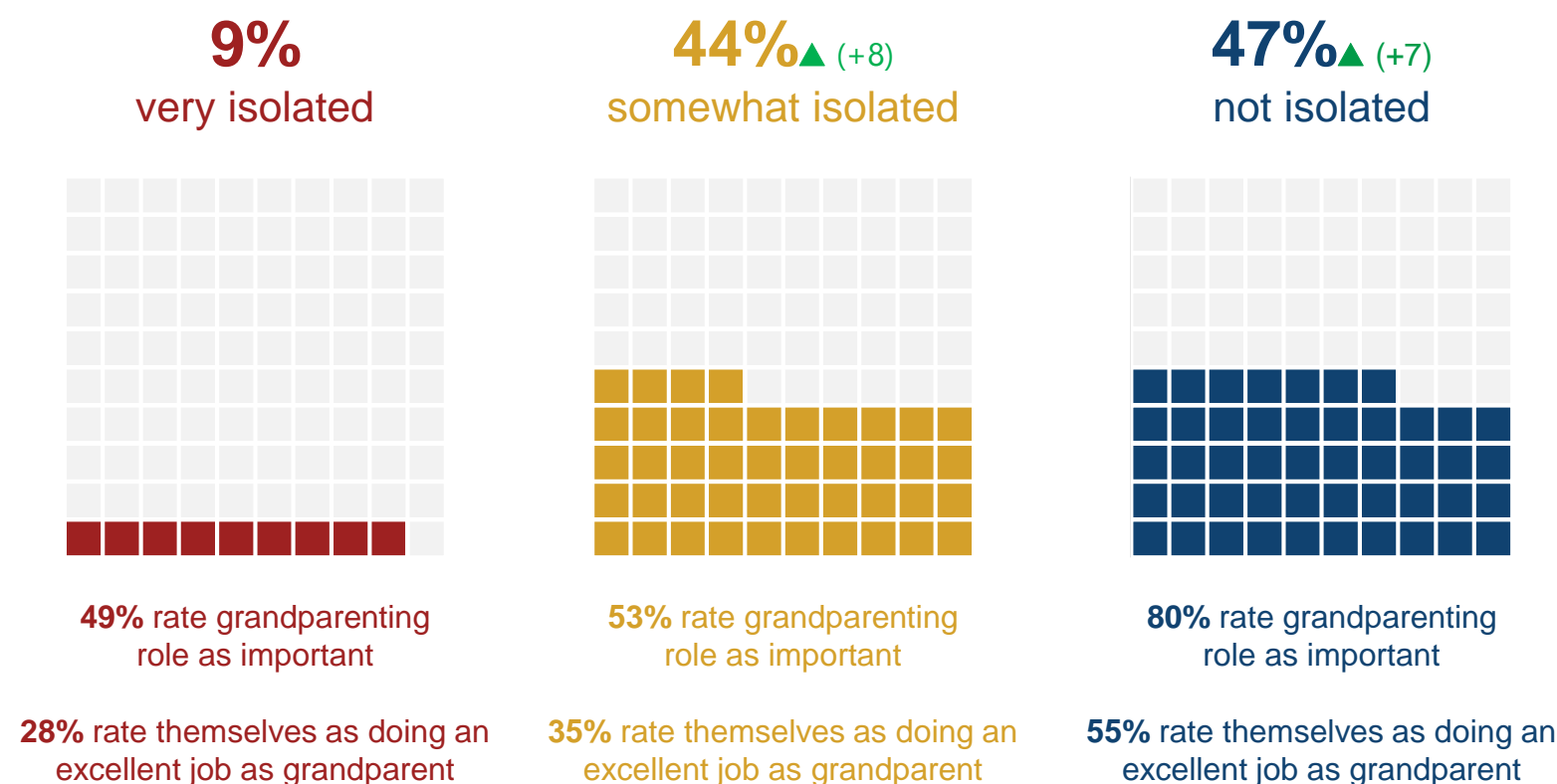
▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level



HEALTH IMPACT / OUTCOMES

African American/Black grandparents have low levels of isolation.

This could be attributed to their high levels of engagement in their grandchildren’s lives.



Isolation: The objective experience of diminished social connectedness as measured by the quality, type, frequency, and emotional satisfaction of social ties. Social isolation can impact health, quality of life, and the quality of the environment and community in which people live.

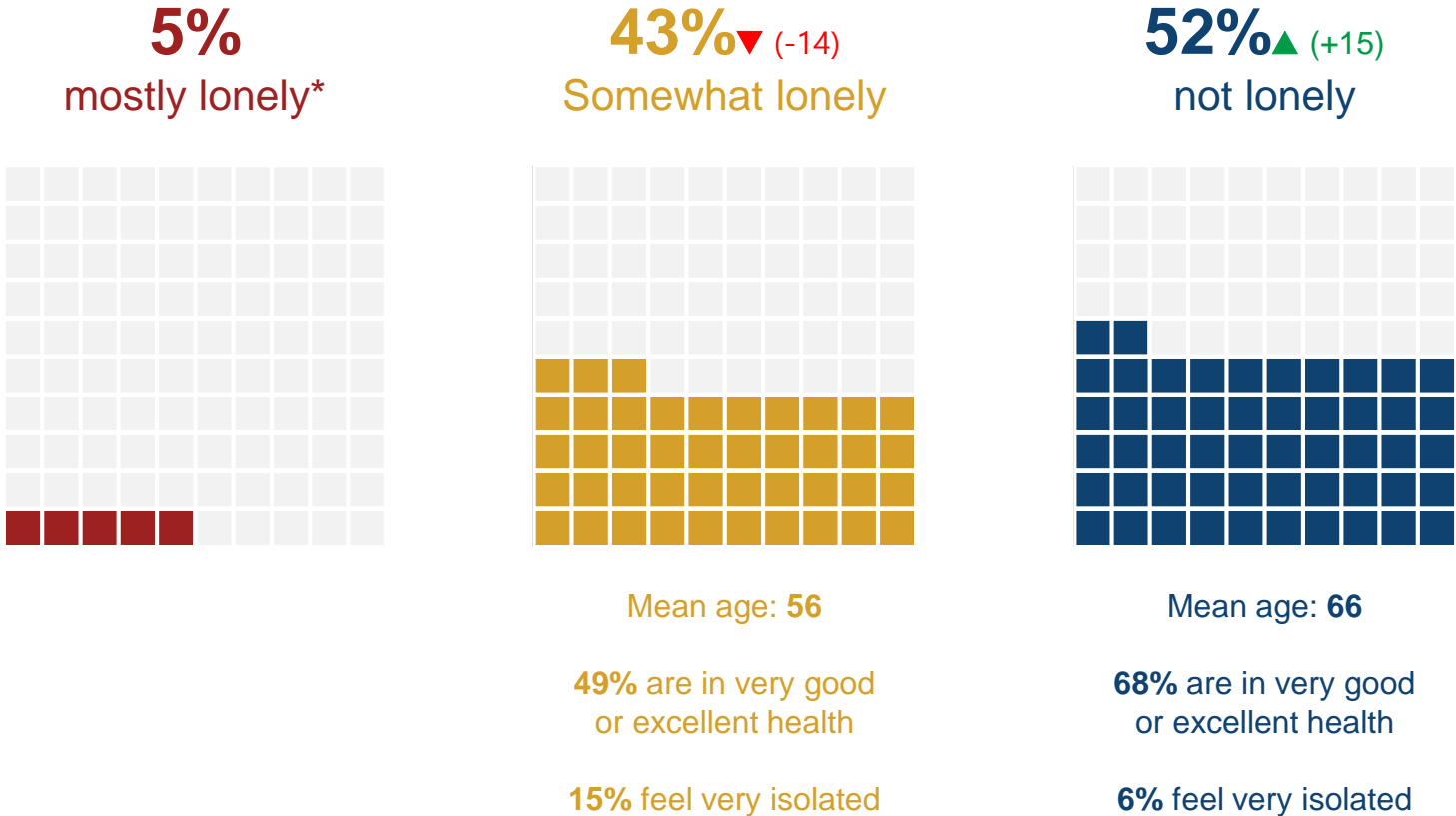
Base: Total African American / Black grandparents (n=627)
Isolation as defined by Q68/69/70. Gen Pop Very Isolated 7%.

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

They are also slightly less lonely than the general population.

This further highlights the importance of their grandchildren on their overall well-being.

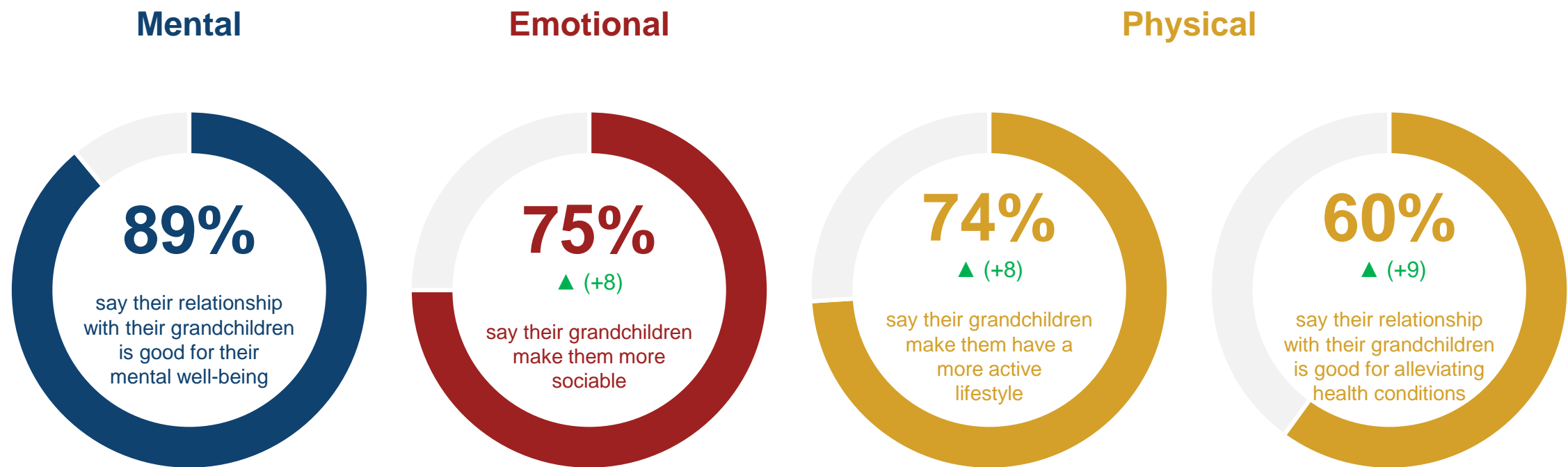
Loneliness: The subjective experience of how people perceive their personal experiences and whether they feel they lack connections, companionship, or a sense of belonging that we need as humans.



Base: Total African American / Black grandparents (n=627).
Q65: The following statements describe how people sometimes feel. For each statement, please indicate how often you feel the way described.
*Low base size for most lonely African American / Black grandparents (n=27). Gen Pop Very Lonely 6%

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level

African American/Black grandparents are more likely to reap the emotional and physical benefits associated with their role.



Base: Total Black / African American grandparents (n=627)
Q67: Grandchildren impact on health: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

▲ Statistically higher than the general population at the 95% confidence level
▼ Statistically lower than the general population at the 95% confidence level



APPENDIX — SAMPLE PROFILE

B/AA Sample Profile

	B/AA	General Population
<i>Base:</i>	<i>n= 627</i>	<i>n=2,654</i>
Age		
Generation X (ages 38–53)	17	17
Boomers (ages 54–72)	50	50
Silent Generation (ages 73–85+)	33	33
Mean age	65	65.6
Gender		
Female	58	58
Male	42	42
Other	-	<0.5
Census Region		
Northeast	13	18
Midwest	23	22
South	50	37
West	14	23
Community		
Urban	45	31
Suburban	43	55
Rural	11	14
Marital Status		
Married / Living with partner	50	66
Widowed	14	14
Divorced / Separated	23	15
Single	13	4



	B/AA	General Population
<i>Base:</i>	<i>n= 627</i>	<i>n=2,654</i>
Income		
High (75,000+)	29	44
Medium (40,000–74,999)	30	25
Low (<40,000)	23	23
Race/Ethnicity		
White	-	68
African American / Black	100	14
Hispanic / Latino	-	10
Asian American	-	6
Education		
< High school	1	2
High school	15	15
Technical training	5	6
Some college	35	27
College	27	32
Graduate	16	20
Employment		
Retired / No longer working	51	48
Employed full-time	24	27
Employed part-time	7	9
Retired / Working elsewhere part-time	5	6
Homemaker	4	4
Unemployed, looking for work	2	2
Retired / Working elsewhere full-time	1	2
Student	<0.5	1
Other	3	1
Prefer not to answer	2	<0.5



Detailed Profile of AA/B Grandparents










	Total
Base:	n= 627
Most common language spoken at home	
English	99
Spanish	-
Mandarin	-
Other	1
Prefer not to say	-



	Total
Base:	n= 627
Attend Religious Services	
Weekly or more often	45
A few times a month	14
A few times a year	14
Less often than once a year	22
Prefer not to answer	5
Volunteered in past 12 months	
Yes	51
No	49

Detailed Profile of AA/B Grandparents (cont'd)

	Total
<i>Base</i>	<i>n= 627</i>
Type of Grandchildren	
 Grandchildren	99
Great grandchildren	28
Step-grandchildren	15
Adopted grandchildren	4
Mean number of grandchildren	5.5
Grandchildren's Gender	
 Granddaughters	87
Mean number of granddaughters	2.7
Grandsons	84
Mean number of grandsons	2.8
Age of Grandchildren	
0–11 months	12
1–4 years	48
5–9	56
 10–12	42
13–17	43
18–34	52
35–44	10
45+	1
Children Raised	
 Mean number of children raised	4.1

	Total
<i>Base</i>	<i>n= 627</i>
Maternal/Paternal	
 From my daughter(s)	37
From my son(s)	30
Both	33
Maternal/Paternal Grandchild Closeness	n=207
 I am equally close to both / all	76
Daughter/Granddaughter	19
Son/Grandson	5
Why Closer Relationship	n=52
They live with me	100
I see them more often	53
They live closer to me	48
 I have a closer relationship with my son / daughter	27
My son's / daughter's children are older	18
Son / Daughter is my biological child	8
My son's / daughter's children are younger	7
I don't get along with my son's / daughter's partner	2
Other	1



METHODOLOGY

Methodology: Quantitative Survey, n=627

Objectives: Explore modern grandparent topics, trends, and issues to help fully understand the evolving role of grandparents today

Vendor: Research conducted by Hotspex Inc.

Methodology: Online survey via Research Now SSI Panel (targeting panelists ages 38 or older), supplemented with offline intercepts (among those ages 73 or older)

Qualifications: Ages 38 or older; have ≥ 1 grandchild (inclusive of step grandchildren, adopted grandchildren and great grandchildren). Target set for sample of African American/Black grandparents

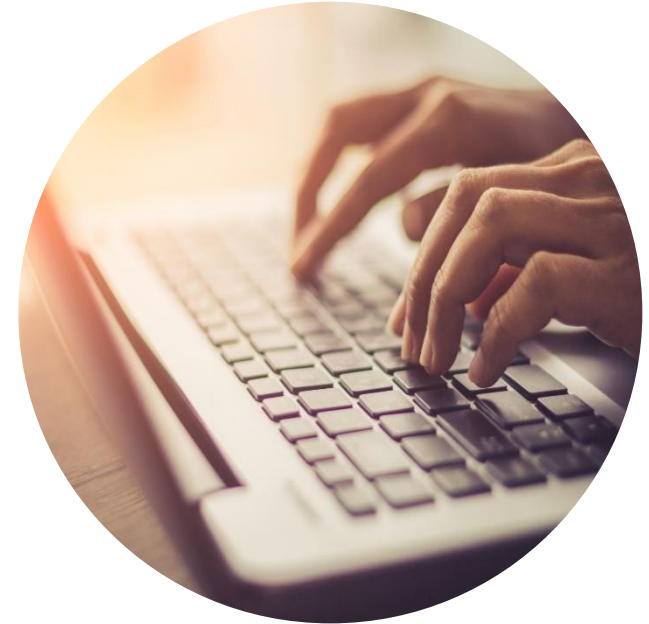
Sample: Research Now SSI Panel and offline intercept participants **n=627**

Interviewing Dates: August 20 to September 4, 2018

Language of Interview: English

Weighting: The data are weighted according to demographics within general grandparents ages 38+.

Questionnaire length: The survey was approximately **21** minutes in length online (**30** minutes offline/intercept).



**The focus of this report is on
African American/Black
grandparents (ages 38+)**

Methodology: Qualitative In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

Objectives: To obtain in-depth and personal insight into grandparenting as it relates to various topics

Vendor: IDIs were conducted by Hotspex Inc.

Methodology: Ten 45-minute in-depth phone interviews (IDIs)

Qualifications: Grandparents between 43 and 76 years old who saw their grandchildren at least twice per year

Interviewing Dates: July 26 and 27, 2018

Language of Interview: English



Defining “Isolation”

The following definition was used to define level of **isolation** among grandparents:

Q68. How many of your friends OR family members would you say you have a close relationship with?

- Close friends (range 0 to 10+)
- Close family (range 0 to 10+)

Each respondent scored based on number of close friends and family

- 0 to 4 friends/family members – 1
- 5 to 7 friends/family members – 2
- 8 to 10 friends/family members – 3
- 11 to 13 friends/family members – 4
- 14 to 16 friends/family members – 5
- 17+ friends/family members – 6

Q69. On average, how often do you do each of the following with any of your friends?

- Meet up (including both arranged and chance meetings)

Score for each response given:

- 3 or more times a week – 6
- Once or twice a week – 5
- Once or twice a month – 4
- Every few months – 3
- Once or twice a year – 2
- Less than once a year or never – 1

Q70. On average, how often do you do each of the following with any of your family?

- Meet up (including both arranged and chance meetings)

Score for each response given:

- 3 or more times a week – 6
- Once or twice a week – 5
- Once or twice a month – 4
- Every few months – 3
- Once or twice a year – 2
- Less than once a year or never – 1

A score is calculated across the number for friends and family they have, and the frequency of physical interactions they have to determine level of isolation:

Not isolated – 13 to 18

Somewhat isolated – 7 to 12

Mostly isolated – 1 to 6

Defining “Loneliness”

The following definition was used to define level of **loneliness** among grandparents:

Q65. The following statements describe how people sometimes feel. For each statement, please indicate how often you feel the way described.

How often do you feel that you lack companionship?

How often do you feel left out?

How often do you feel isolated from others?

Score for each response:

Always – 3

Sometimes – 2

Rarely – 1

Never – 0

A mean score is provided to each respondent across the three statements, used to categorize level of loneliness:

Not lonely – 0 to 1.4

Somewhat lonely – 1.5 to 2.4

Mostly lonely – 2.5 to 3.0

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million that helps people turn their goals and dreams into 'Real Possibilities' by changing the way America defines aging. With staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and promote the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare security, financial security and personal fulfillment. AARP also advocates for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world's largest circulation magazine, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @aarp and our CEO @JoAnn_Jenkins on Twitter.

About Hotspex Inc.

Hotspex Inc. is a full-service market research company with 1 purpose: to help brands grow. Founded in 2000, Hotspex has conducted research in 34 countries around the world. Hotspex operates globally, with offices in Toronto, New York and London. For more information, visit Hotspex's website at www.Hotspex.com.

Footnotes

¹ [“Median income of black private households in the U.S. from 1990 to 2017.”](https://www.statista.com/statistics/203295/median-income-of-black-households-in-the-us/) Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/203295/median-income-of-black-households-in-the-us/>

² [“Parenting in America: Outlook, worries, aspirations are strongly linked to financial situations.”](#) Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, December 17, 2015.



Brittne Nelson-Kakulla, bkakulla@aarp.org

Patty David, pdavid@aarp.org

This research was designed and executed by AARP Research