

DATA SLICE #58

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How Has Grandparenthood Changed in Rural China? Merril Silverstein

China's rapid modernization and development have led to changes across Chinese society, including within the family. In China's collectivistic culture, adult children are strongly encouraged to care for their aging parents, and grandparents are encouraged to act as caregivers for their grandchildren. However, some aspects of grandparenthood have changed in recent years. Declining birth rates mean that fewer older adults are becoming grandparents, while the demand for grandparents to serve as caregivers has risen in rural areas due to parents seeking employment in urban centers. As Figure 1 indicates, the probability of having grandchildren under the age of 16 decreased from 60% in 2001 to 41% in 2018. During the same time frame, the proportion of grandparents providing full-time care dramatically increased from 30% to 70%. Grandparents' ability to care for grandchildren has improved due to benefits from modernization such as better health in later life and increased access to financial resources. Policies that provide additional support for grandparents, such as pension bonuses for caregivers, would help to lower caregiving burden and stress that can lead to poor health outcomes among older adult caregivers.

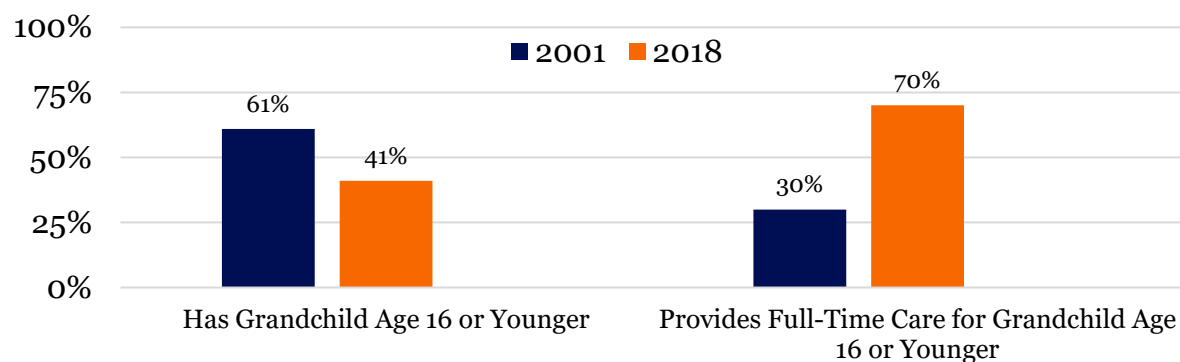


Figure 1. Probability of Older Adults (ages 60–77) Having a Preadult Grandchild and Conditional Probability of Providing Full-Time Care for Grandchildren in 2001 and 2018 Cohorts

Data Source: The Longitudinal Study of Older Adults in Anhui Province, China; 2001-2018; N=1,253 in 2001 and 932 in 2018. Findings summarized in this brief are based on analyses reported in <https://doi.org/10.1093/ppar/prac012>.

About the Author

Merril Silverstein (merrils@syr.edu) is the Marjorie Cantor Professor of Aging Studies, Professor of Sociology in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences in the Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics, and a Faculty Associate in the Center for Aging and Policy Studies and the Aging Studies Institute at Syracuse University (SU).