

A Cohort Comparison of Grandparents Caring for their Grandchildren in Rural China

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Rural-to-Urban Migration in China

- About 300,000 migrant workers helped build the Olympics venues, many making \$5 per day.
- China's new economy requires mobile and flexible labor force—higher earnings potential has attracted younger workers to cities to work in industrial, service, and construction work.
- Internal migrants increased from 70 million in 1993 to 150 million in 2005, accounting for about one-third of all rural laborers.



Grandchild-Care in Rural China



- Grandchild care allows adult children the freedom to migrate and take jobs at a distance.
- As many as 60 million children left behind in rural villages—vast majority live with grandparents.
- Grandparent care is an adaptive response to labor market pressures that benefit the children, grandchildren, and the grandparents themselves (Silverstein & Cong, 2007)

But China is Changing In Other Ways

- Accelerated change in China—rapid economic development, improvements in population health, strong fertility policies—has produced new dynamics for Chinese grandparents.
- These changes may produce opposite effects on grandparents caregiving for grandchildren.
- In this study we compare the caregiving activities of two cohorts of Chinese grandparents based on differences in their family, health, and social conditions.

Rapid Changes in China With Impact on Grandparent Caregiving

- Family change due to one-child policy, family planning, economic development, longevity
 - Fewer grandchildren overall
 - Should reduce demand to provide care
 - Smaller clusters of grandchildren per adult child
 - Should reduce demand to provide care
 - Lower rates of widowhood
 - Should increase capacity to provide care

Rapid Changes in China With Impact on Grandparents

- Health change due to improving conditions and health insurance schemes
 - Improved physical health
 - Should increase capacity to provide care
 - Improved cognitive health
 - Should increase capacity to provide care
 - Improved quality of life leading to greater emotional well-being
 - Should increase capacity to provide care

Rapid Changes in China With Impact on Grandparents

- Social change due to rapid economic development
 - Rising incomes among older adults
 - Should increase capacity to provide care
 - Improving education in working age rural population
 - Should reduce demand to provide care
 - Fewer migrant sons per family
 - Should reduce demand to provide care



Sample



- Longitudinal Study of Older Adults in Anhui Province, China
- Joint project of Xi'an Jiaotong University and the University of Southern California.
- Random sample in 2001 of 1,698 adults age 60 and over living in rural townships within Chaohu city
- Surveys conducted every 2 ½ - 3 years
 - Spring 2001 → Fall 2003 → Spring 2006 → Summer 2009
- In 2009 a new cohort of 370 grandparents aged 60-66 was added to match 553 grandparents aged 60-66 in 2001.

Anhui Province, China



Anhui Province, China

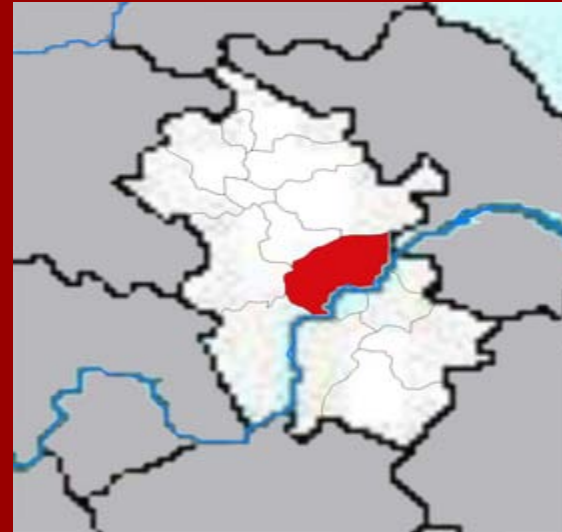


- Fifth largest province in China (60 million)
- 80% rural
- GDP is 28th out of 34 provinces
- 12% of its rural population is 60 years of age and older (compared to only 8.5% of nation).

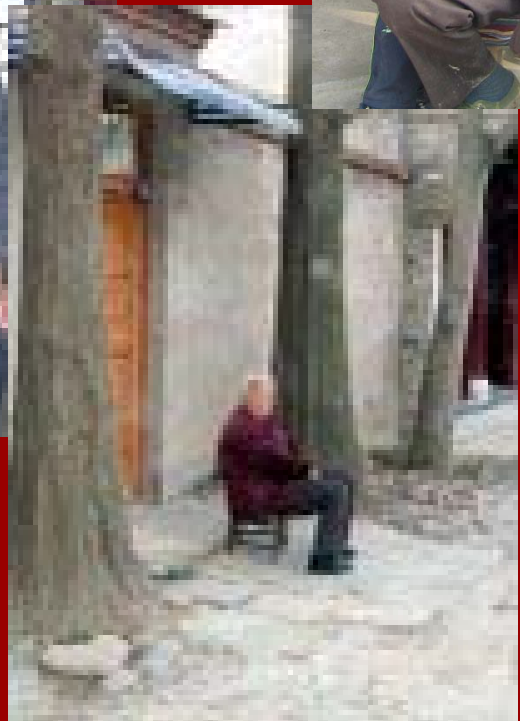


Chaohu City

- Chaohu area—per capita income = \$854.
 - High levels of out-migration of working-age adults to capital city (Hefei), Nanjing, and Shanghai



A Chaohu Village



Grandparent Cohorts

- Two cohorts of grandparents 60-66 years old with at least one grandchild 16 or younger
 - 2001 N= 553 (62.9 yrs)
 - 2009 N= 370 (62.8 yrs)
- In multivariate analysis, dichotomous variable with 2001=0 and 2009=1.

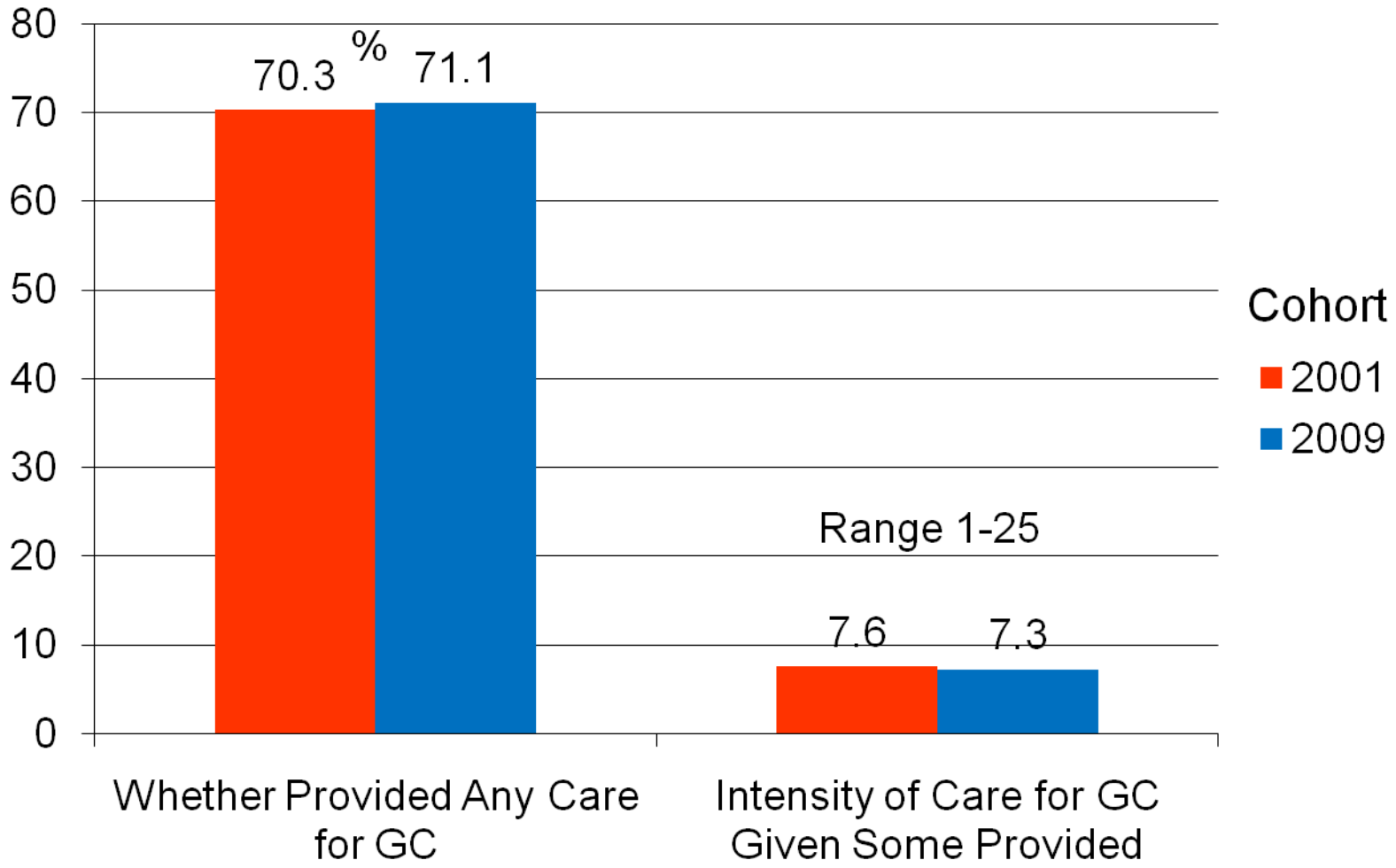
Outcome Measure: Grandparent Caregiving

- Total effort
 - How often do you care for your grandchildren? (asked about sets of offspring of each adult child in which at least one grandchild is 16+)
 - Six point scale ranging from none (0) → everyday (5).
 - Total score summed across all grandchildren sets (0-25)
 - 29.4% reported no care provided
 - Tobit procedure used in predictive model

Outcome Measure: Grandparent Caregiving

- Maximum effort
 - Custodial care = skipped generation household + everyday care
 - Maximum care across grandchild sets if less than custodial (1-5)
 - No care (0)
 - Semi-continuous predictive model used
 - Tobit procedure for predicting 0-5
 - Logistic procedure for predicting custodial care

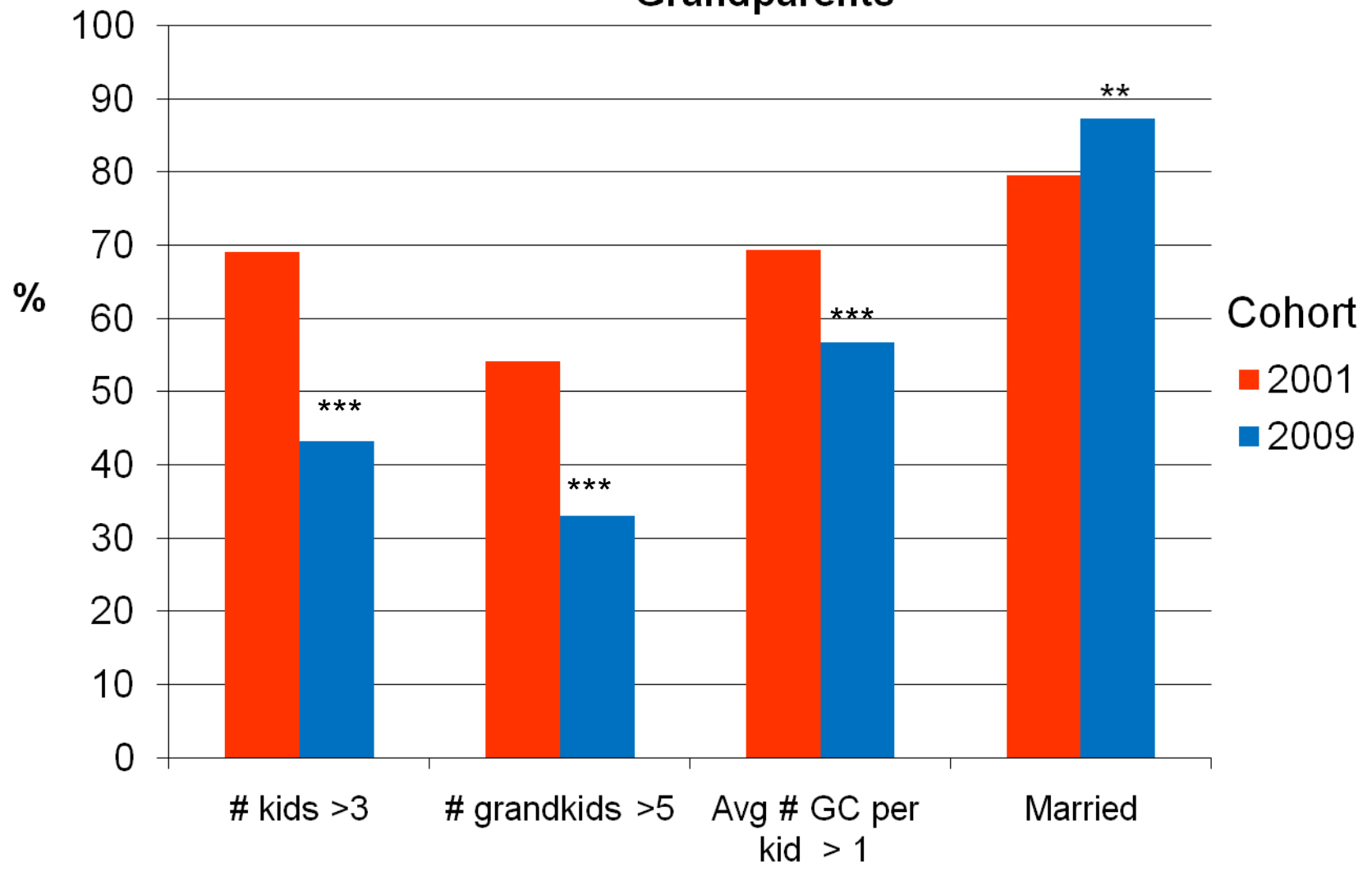
Differences in Grandchild Care Between Two Cohorts of Grandparents (No Significant Differences!)



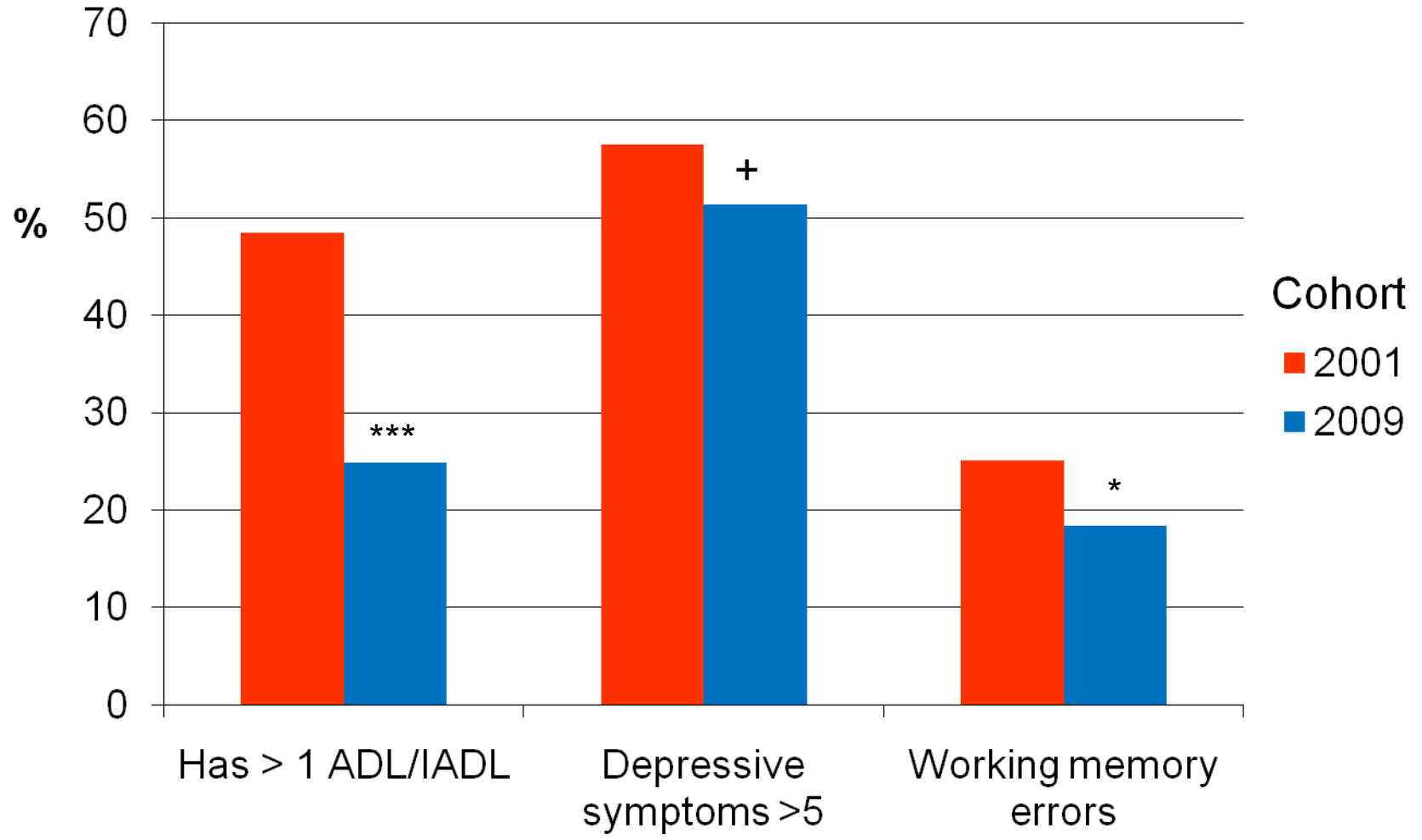
Predictors

- Family factors
 - Number of grandchildren (r with # children $>.7$)
 - Average family size of adult children
 - Married vs. not married
- Health factors
 - Functional health (sum of ADL/IADL problems)
 - Depressive symptoms (sum of six symptoms each rated on three point scale)
 - Cognitive impairment (working memory measured as errors in serial-subtraction test)
- Social factors
 - Income (log of personal + spousal income)
 - Human capital of children (maximum education)
 - Number of migrant sons

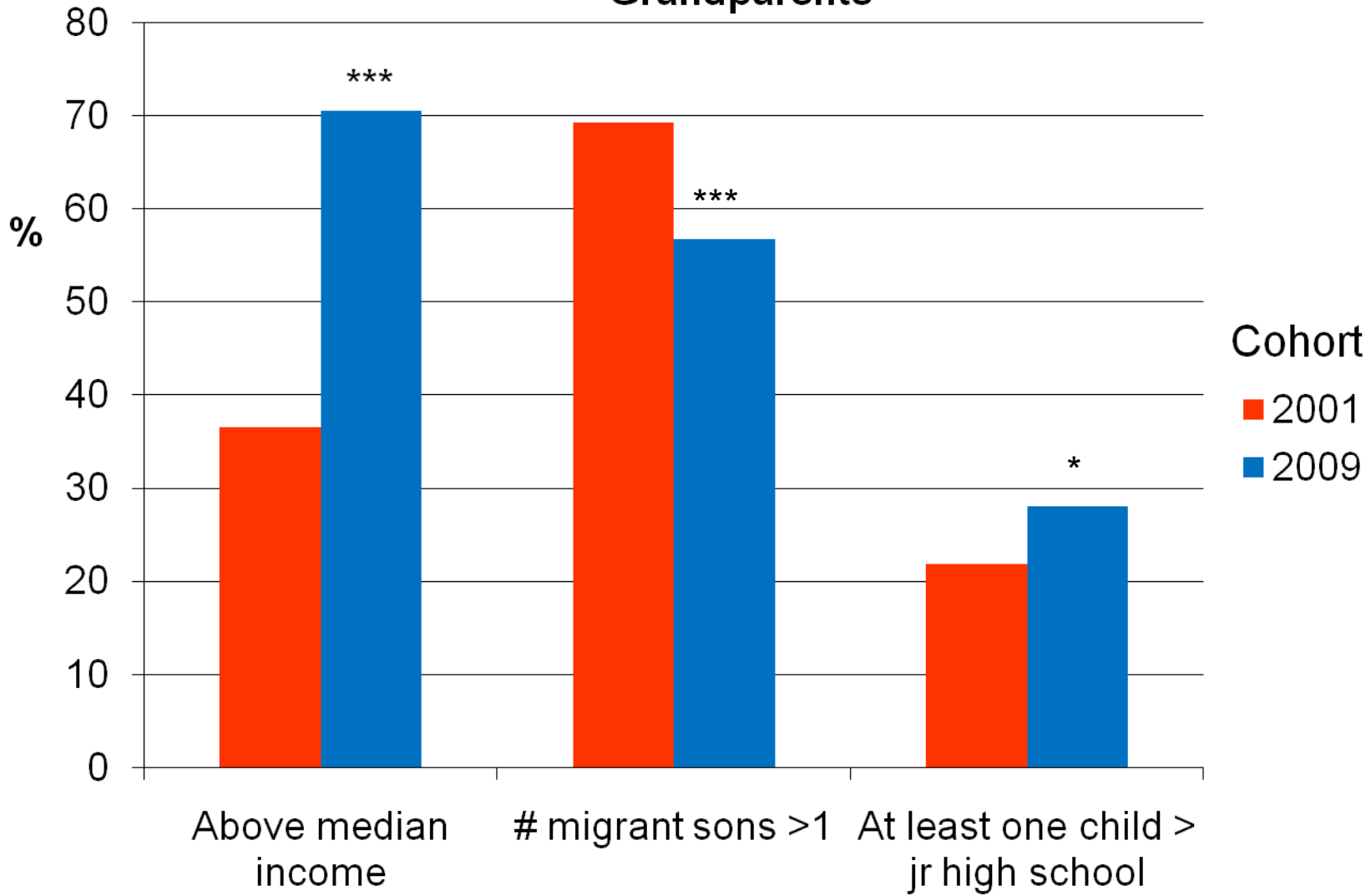
Differences in Family Factors Between Two Cohorts of Grandparents



Differences in Health Factors Between Two Cohorts of Grandparents



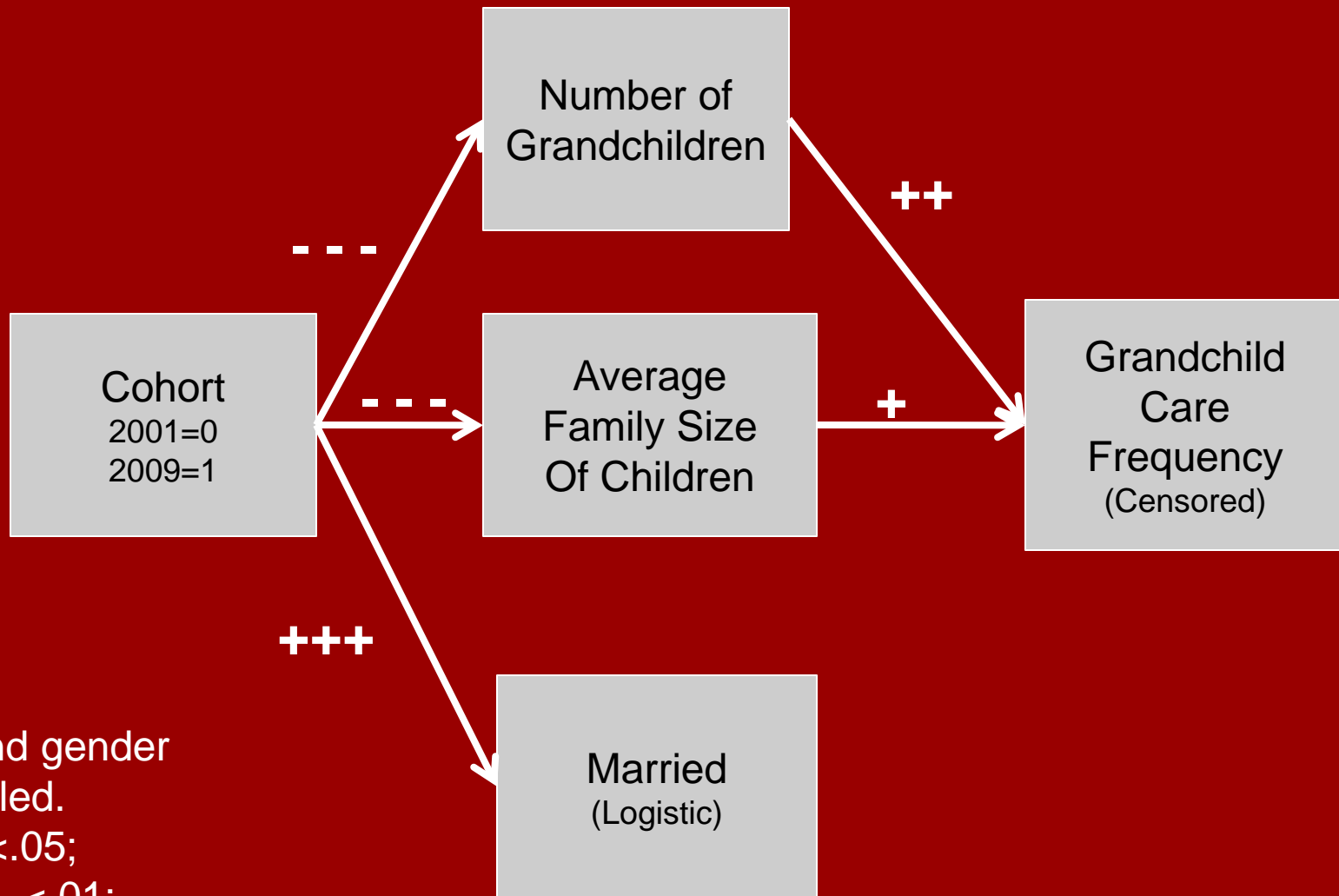
Differences in Social Factors Between Two Cohorts of Grandparents



Regression Analysis

- Path analysis used to predict grandchild care with censored regression (Tobit) because of large number of zeros (29.4%)
- No direct effect of cohort on grandchild care
- Indirect effects of cohort on grandchild care through family, health, and social factors

Summary: Effects of Family Factors



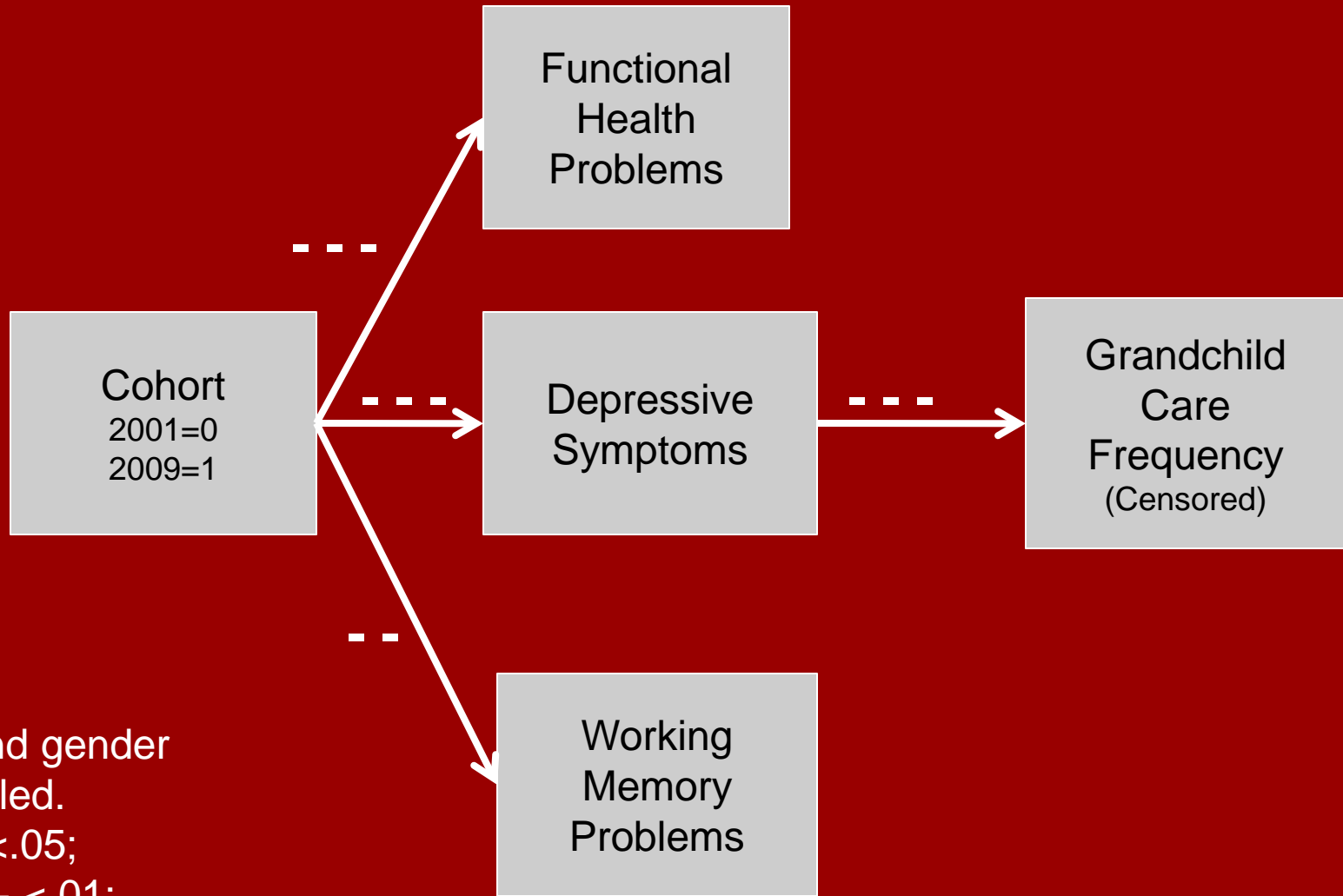
Age and gender controlled.

+ or - <.05;

++ or -- <.01;

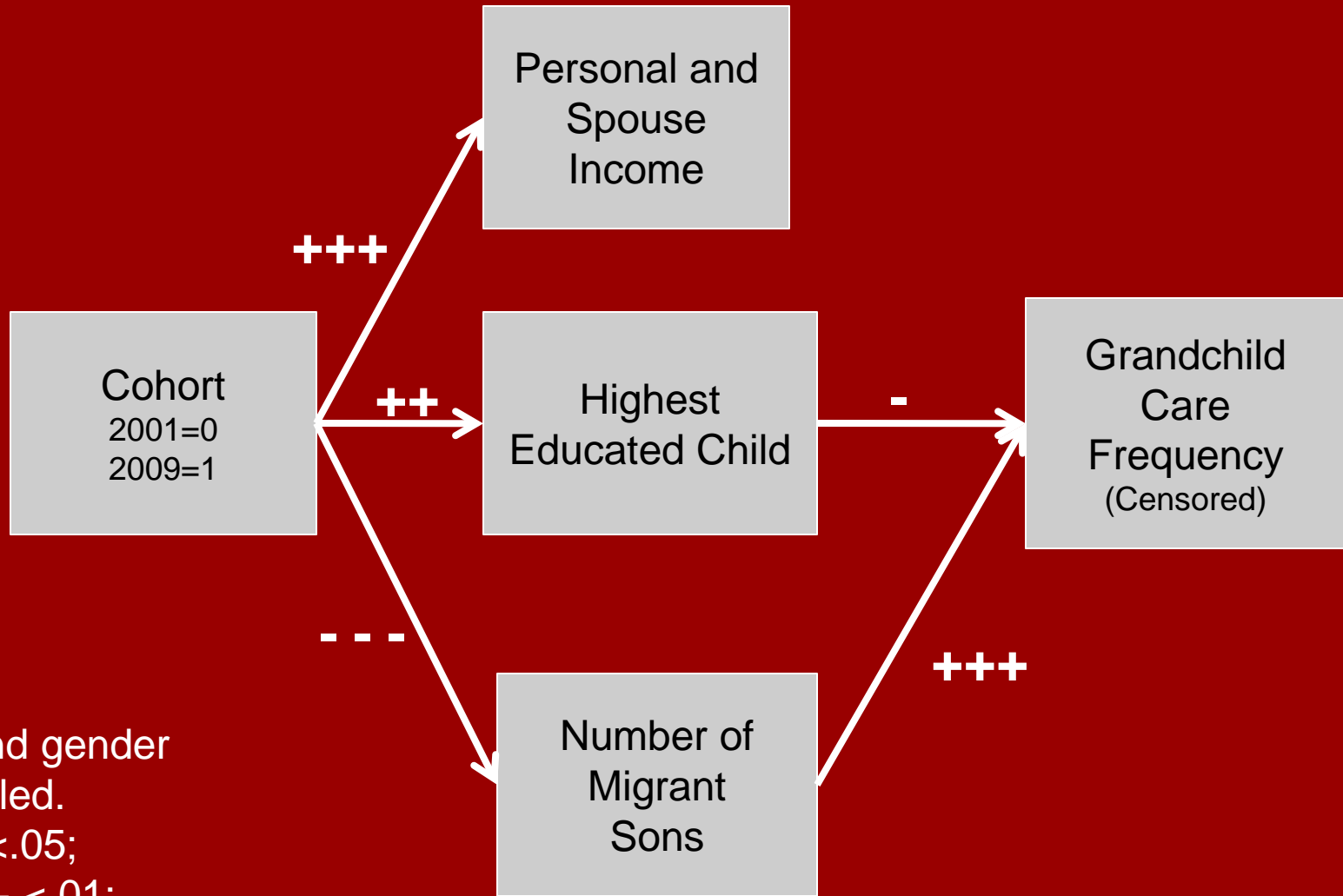
+++ or --- <.001

Summary: Effects of Health Factors



Age and gender controlled.
+ or - <.05;
++ or -- <.01;
+++ or --- <.001

Summary: Effects of Social Factors



Age and gender controlled.
+ or - <.05;
++ or -- <.01;
+++ or --- <.001

Summary

- Rural Chinese grandparents in a more contemporary cohort provide less care to their grandchildren than those in an earlier cohort because the former have
 - fewer grandchildren
 - smaller grandchild-sets
 - more educated children
 - fewer migrant sons
- However, more contemporary grandparents tend to provide more care because they have fewer depressive symptoms.

Discussion

- Fertility decline has altered the opportunity structure for grandparents to contribute to the care of their grandchildren.
- Given patrilineal patterns in Chinese families, having fewer migrant sons has reduced the need for grandparent caregivers.
- Adult children's need for grandparent-provided services has declined as children have improved their economic status.

- Reduced depression across cohorts of grandparent caregivers is likely related to improved quality of life for older people that has enhanced grandparent caregiving.
- Evidence (not shown) that improvements in health has increased *custodial* caregiving!
- In sum, large scale social and economic changes in China have both reduced and enhanced grandparents' involvement in the care of their grandchildren, producing a dynamic equilibrium in care over time.

Acknowledgments

- Collaborators – Lindsey Baker, Man Guo, Lu Zhou
- Shuzhuo Li and his research team at the Institute for Population and Development Studies of Xi'an Jiaotong University
- Iris Chi and the China Research Group in the School of Social Work at the University of Southern California

