

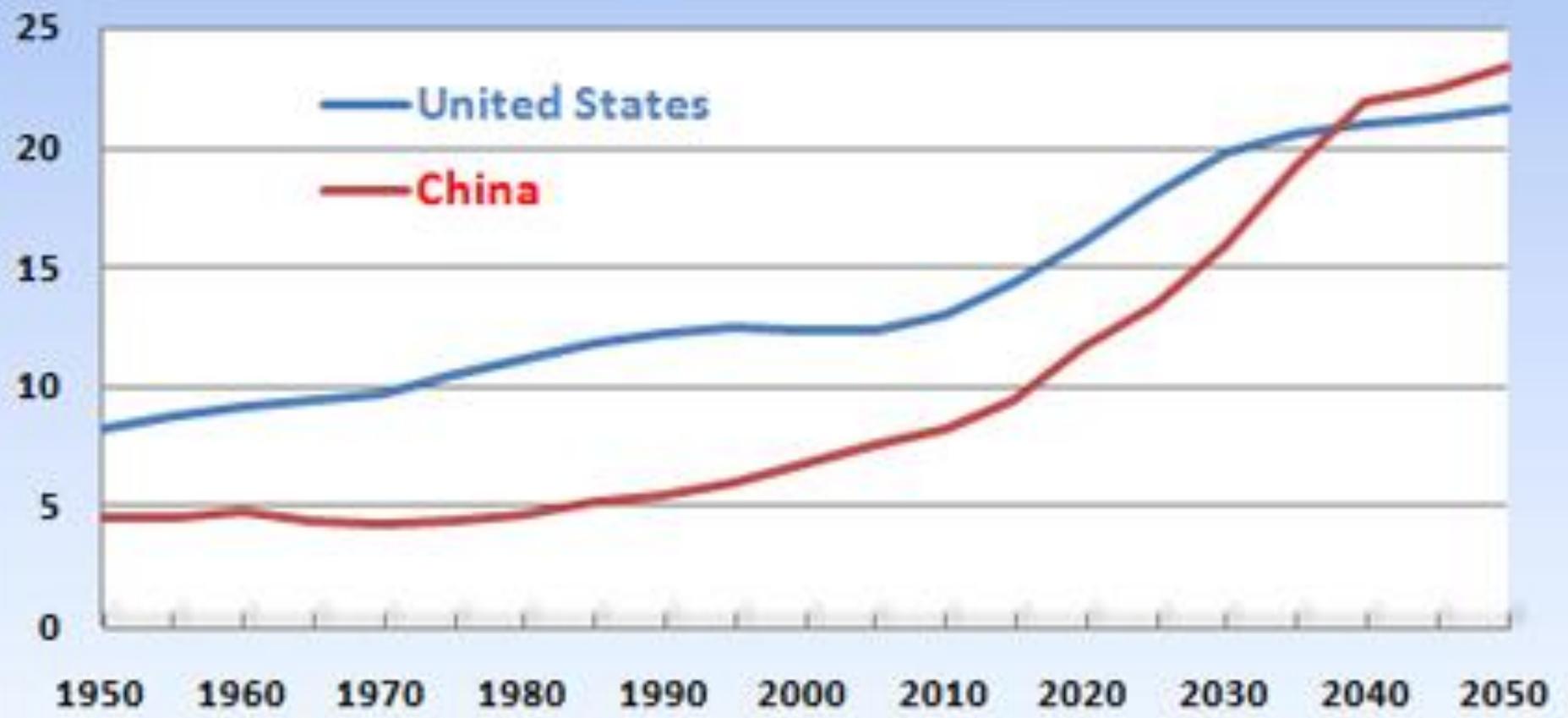
# Older Adults in China as Custodial Grandparents: Lynchpins in the Rural Family System

**Merril Silverstein, Ph.D.**

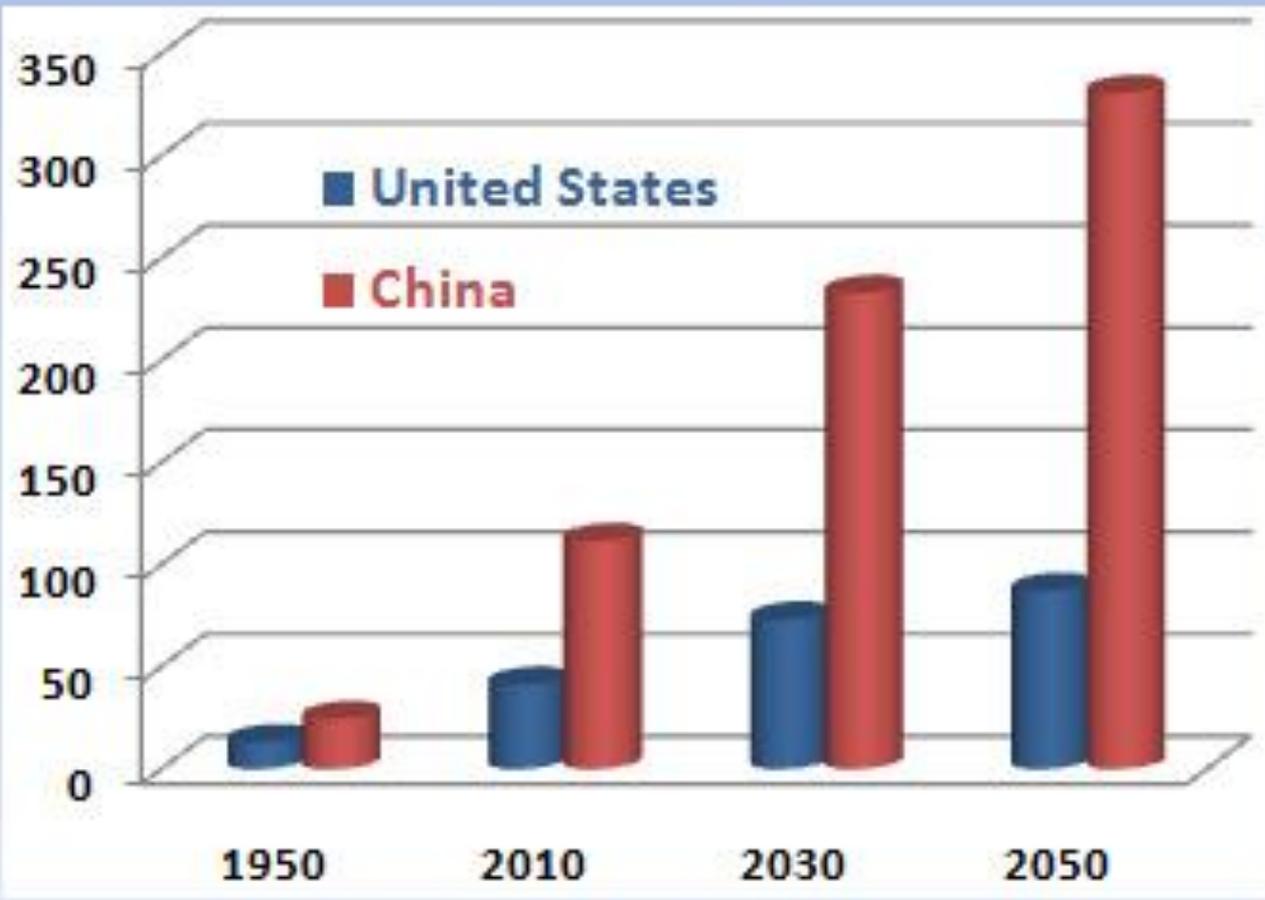
Davis School of Gerontology  
Department of Sociology  
University of Southern California

Presented at University of Dublin, Trinity College, July 9 2010

# Share of Population 65 and Over



# Number of People Over 65 (millions)



# Beijing National Stadium



- About 300,000 migrant workers helped build the Olympics venues, many making \$5 per day.
- “The human fuel behind China's white-hot economy.” (Associated Press).

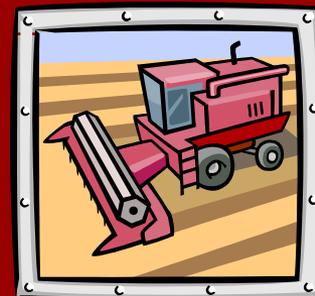
# Internal Migration in China is Age-Graded

- Internal migrants increased from 70 million in 1993 to 150 million in 2005, accounting for about one-third of all rural laborers.
- In 2000, those between 15 and 35 years of age accounted for more than 70% of rural migrants.
- Many studies of economic impact of internal migration and the fate of migrants but little attention to those “left behind”.



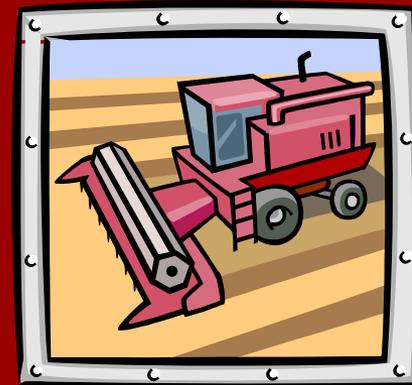
# Labor Migration and the Chinese Economy

- China's new economy requires mobile and flexible labor force--higher earning potential (4-5X rural earnings) has attracted younger workers to cities to work in industrial, service, and construction work.
- Rural migrants now account for 40 percent of the urban labor force.



# Rural-to-urban Migration and the Aged

- Increasingly elderly rural populations in villages bereft of middle generation: the “left behind”
- Increase in geographic distance from adult children.
- More pressure on fewer children to provide support.
- Remittances from migrant children



# Grandchild-Care in Rural China



- Grandchild care allows adult children the freedom to migrate and take jobs at a distance.
- As many as 58 million children left behind – most live with grandparents.
- Do grandparents benefit from their caregiving?
- Or are they a vulnerable group who may struggle in their caregiving duties.



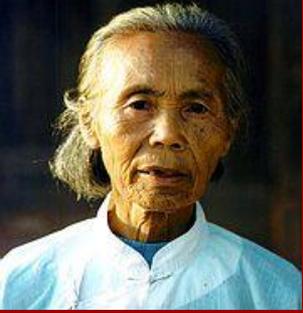
# New York Times, December 21, 2004

## THE GREAT DIVIDE: A MISSING GENERATION: Rural Exodus for Work Fractures Chinese Family

- “In the countryside, the new vernacular phrase is ‘liu shou’ or ‘left behind’ child. Millions of children are growing up without one or both parents. Villages often seem to be missing a generation. Grandparents work the fields and care for the children.”



# Huanghu Township



- The 72 year old grandfather and 65 year old grandmother take care of the two grandchildren. For this, they receive \$150 a year from their migrant children. But the grandparents have arthritis and stomach ailments which make their caregiver role difficult.



# 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 of 1,698 adults age 60 and over living in rural townships within Chaohu city
- 4,289 grandparent-adult child pairs in which there was at least one grandchild under 16 years of age.
- Surveys conducted every 2 ½ - 3 years
  - Spring 2001 → Fall 2003 → Spring 2006 → Summer 2009

# Anhui Province, China



# Anhui Province, China



- Fifth largest province in China (60 million)
- 80% rural
- GDP is 28<sup>th</sup> 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

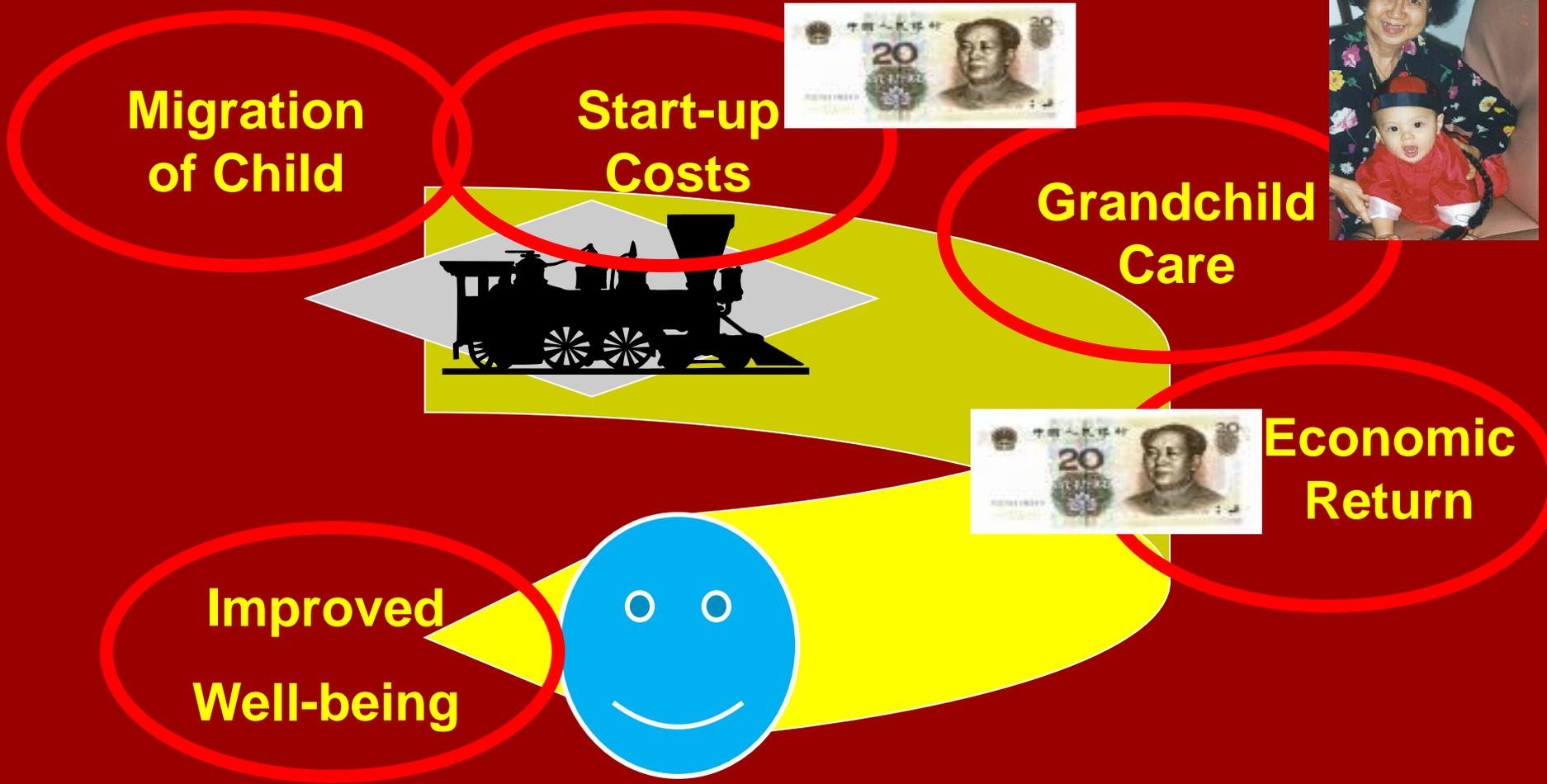
- Chaohu area—per capita income = \$854.
  - High levels of out-migration of working-age adults to capital city (Hefei), Nanjing, and Shanghai



# A Chaohu Village



# Circular Flow of Resources Between Grandparent Caregivers and Migrant Children



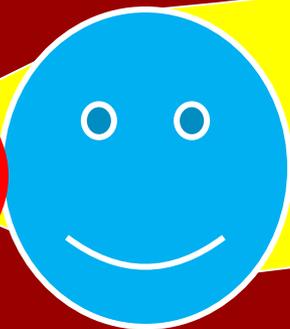
Migration of Child

Start-up Costs

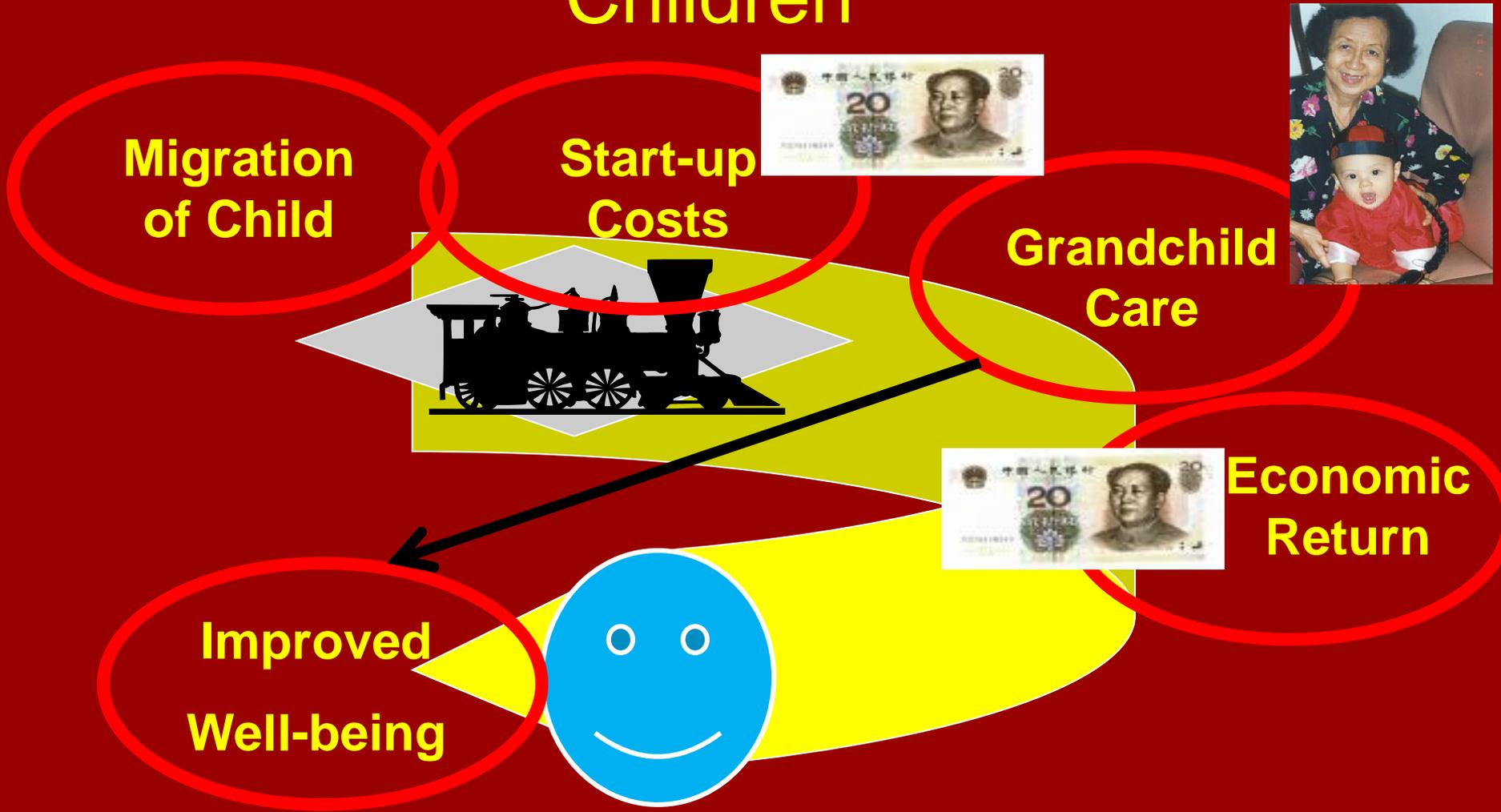
Grandchild Care

Economic Return

Improved Well-being

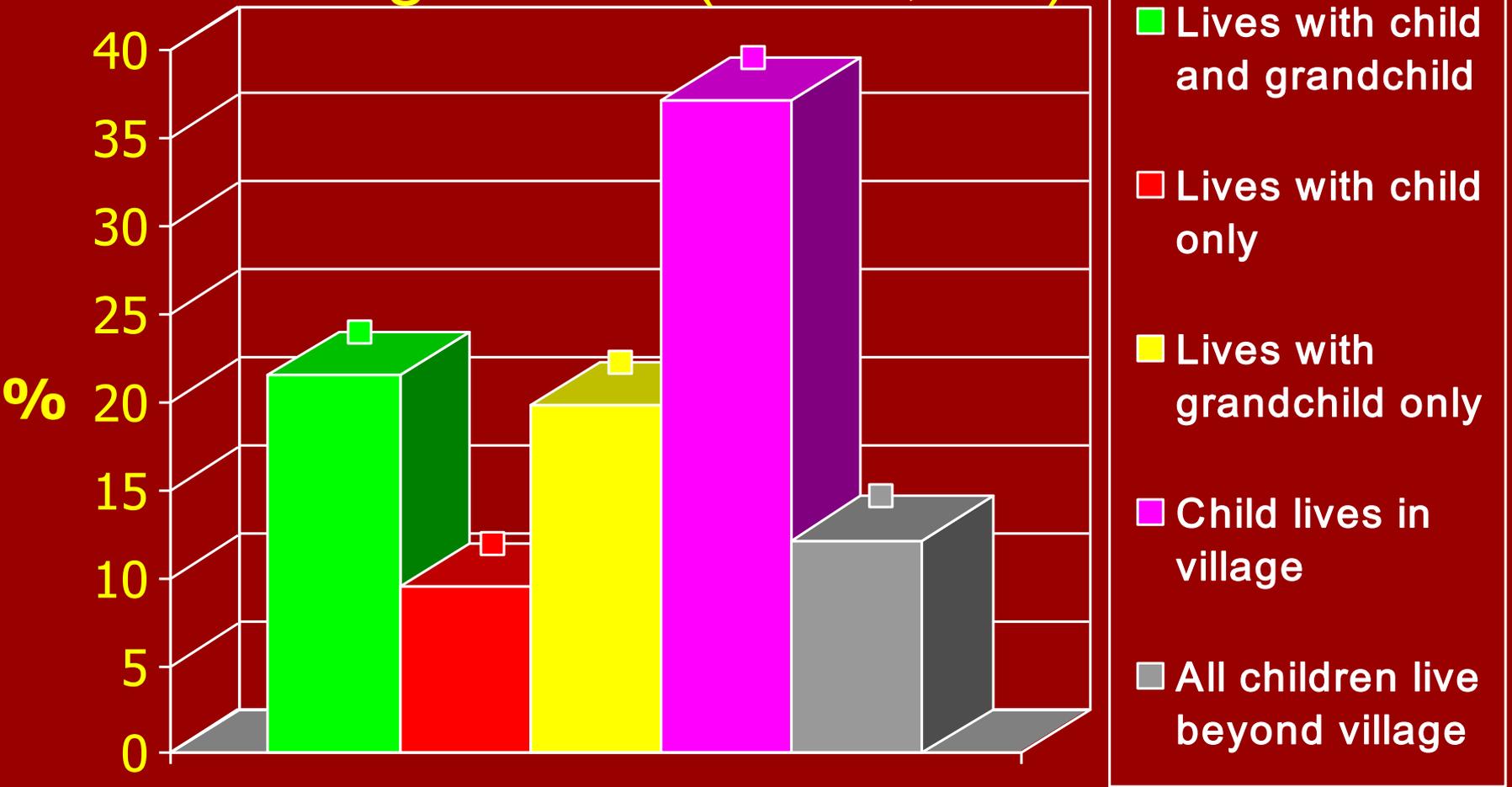


# Circular Flow of Resources Between Grandparent Caregivers and Migrant Children



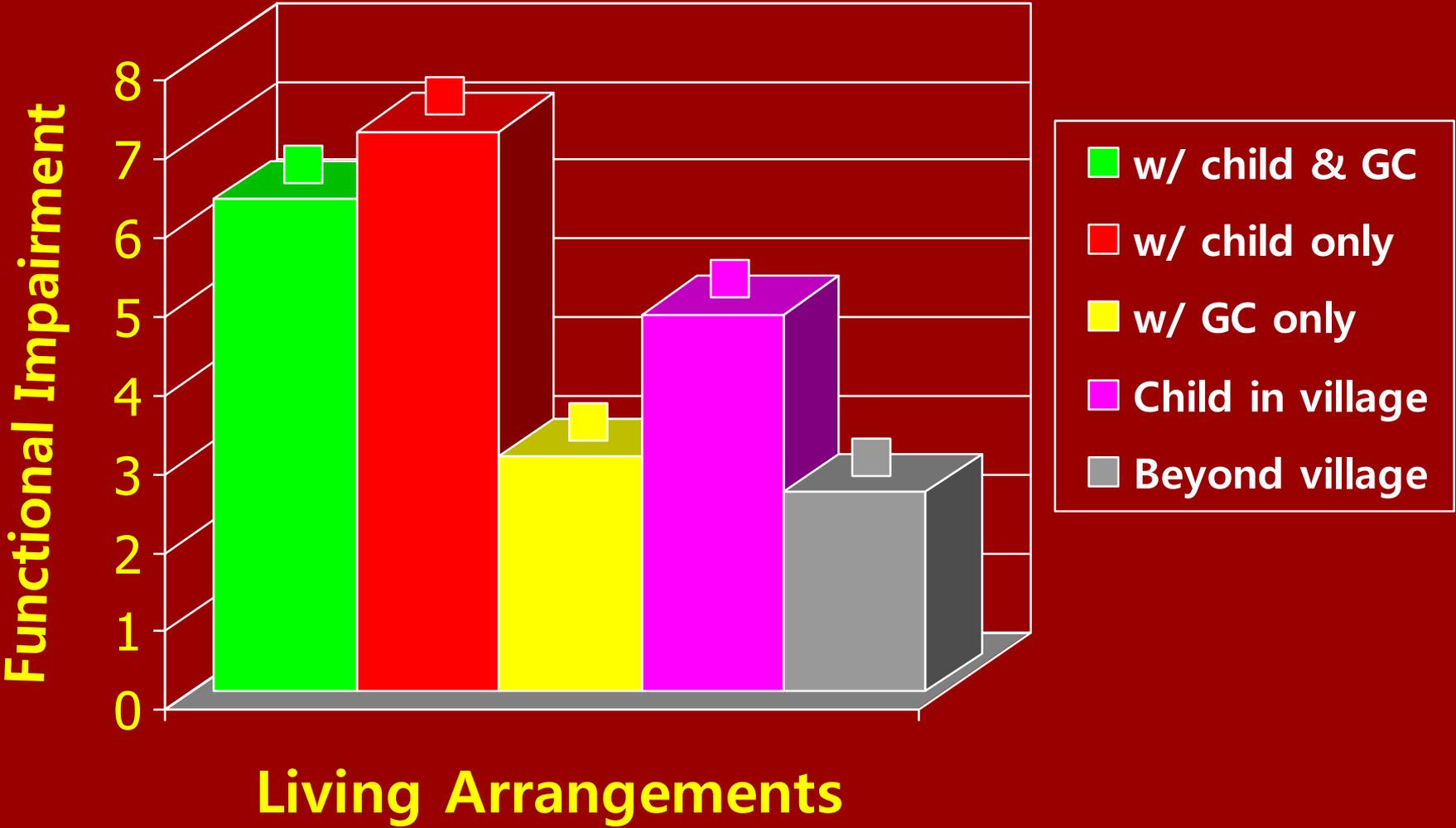
# Distribution of Intergenerational

## Arrangements ( N=1,698)

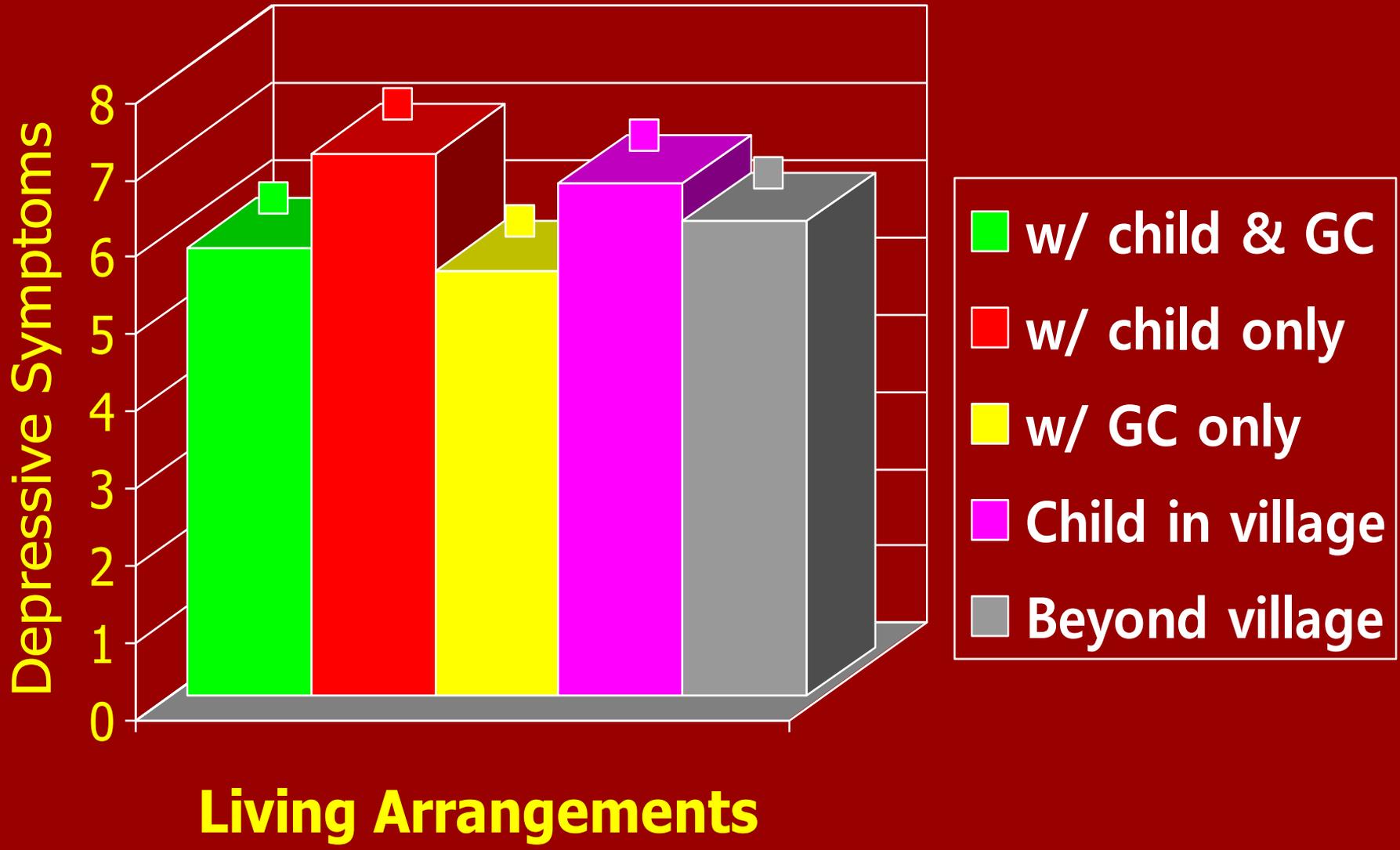


Living Arrangements

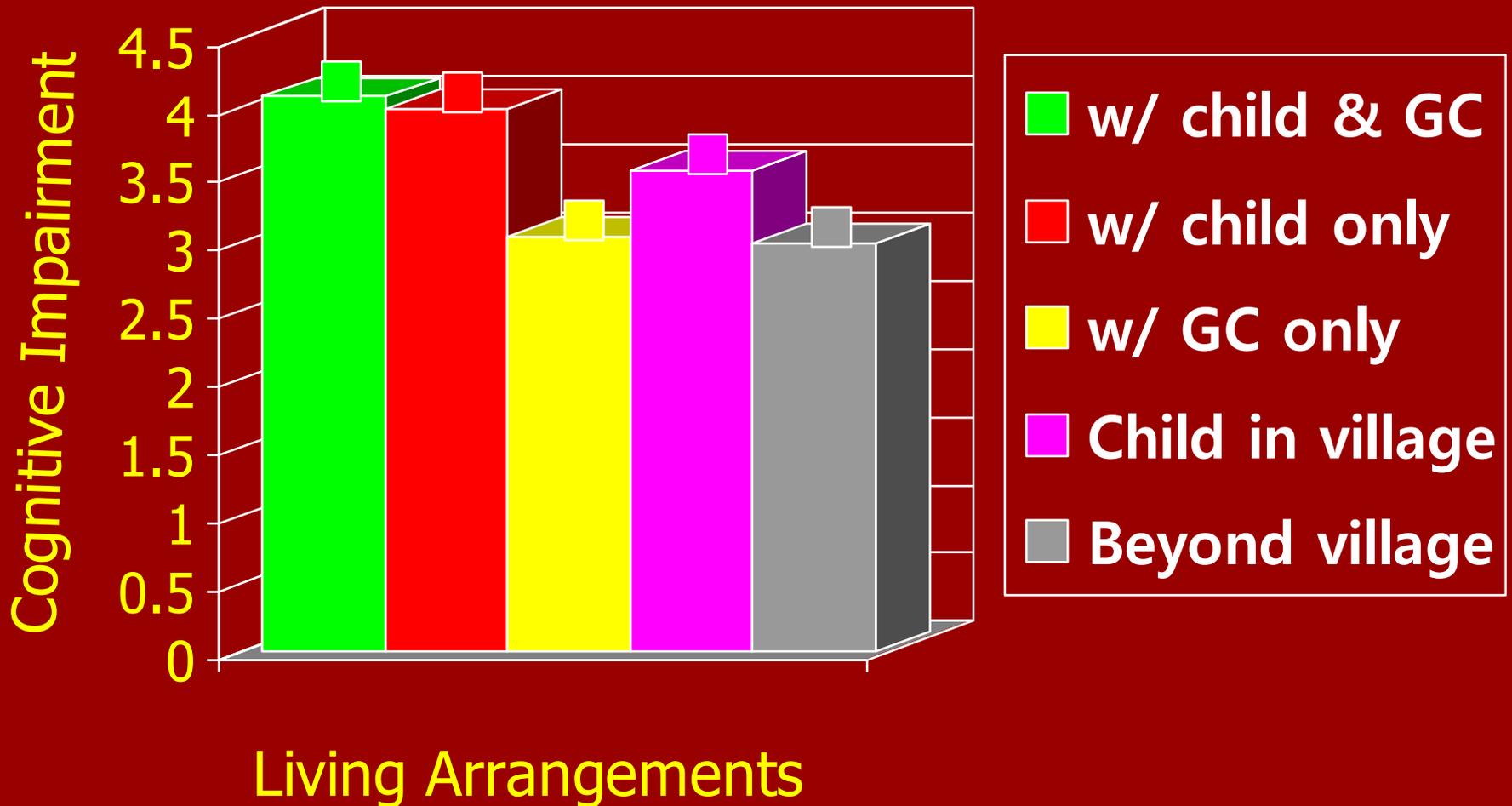
# Intergenerational Arrangements by Functional Impairment (N=1,698)



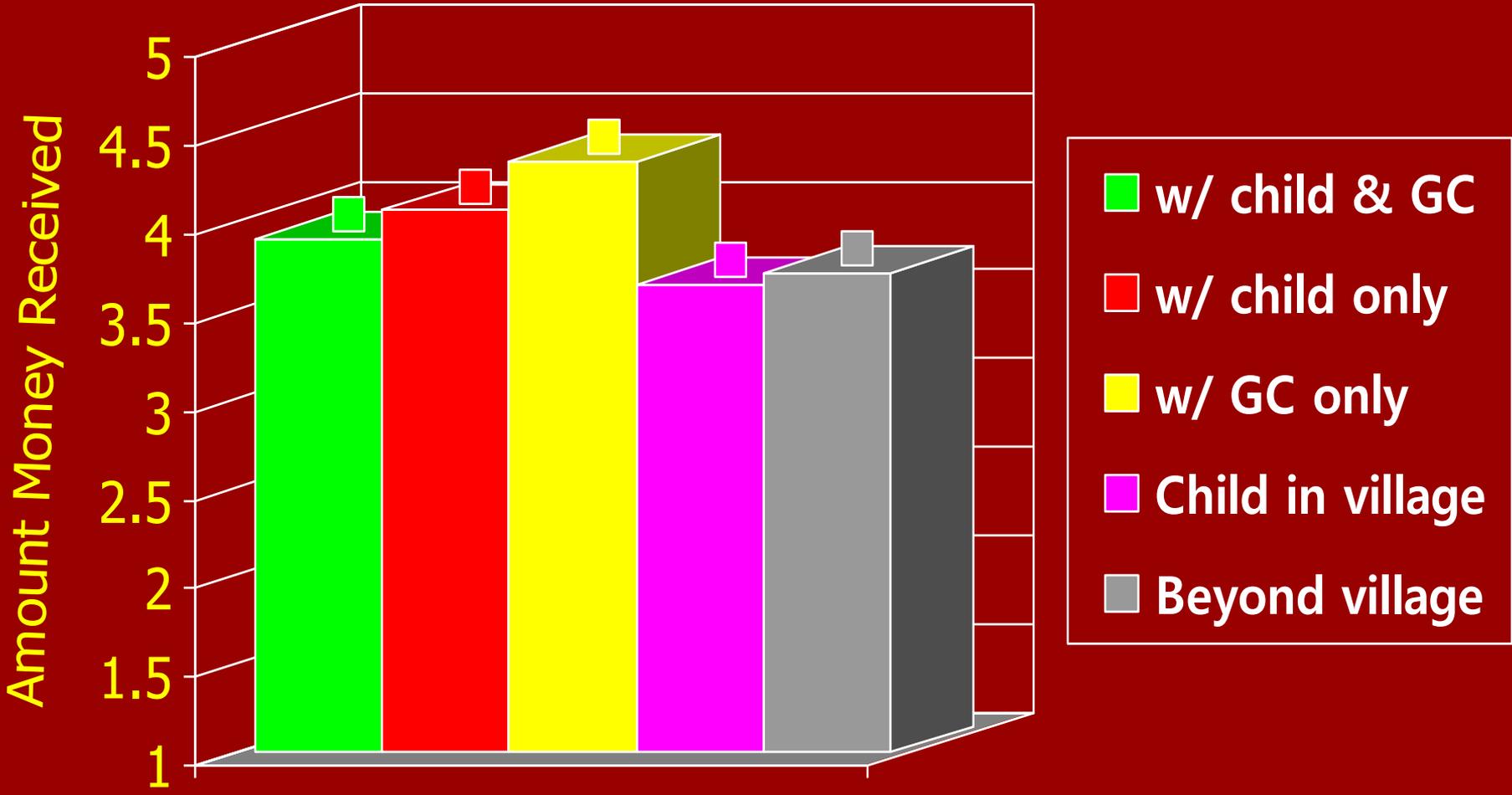
# Intergenerational Arrangements by Depressive Symptoms (N=1,698)



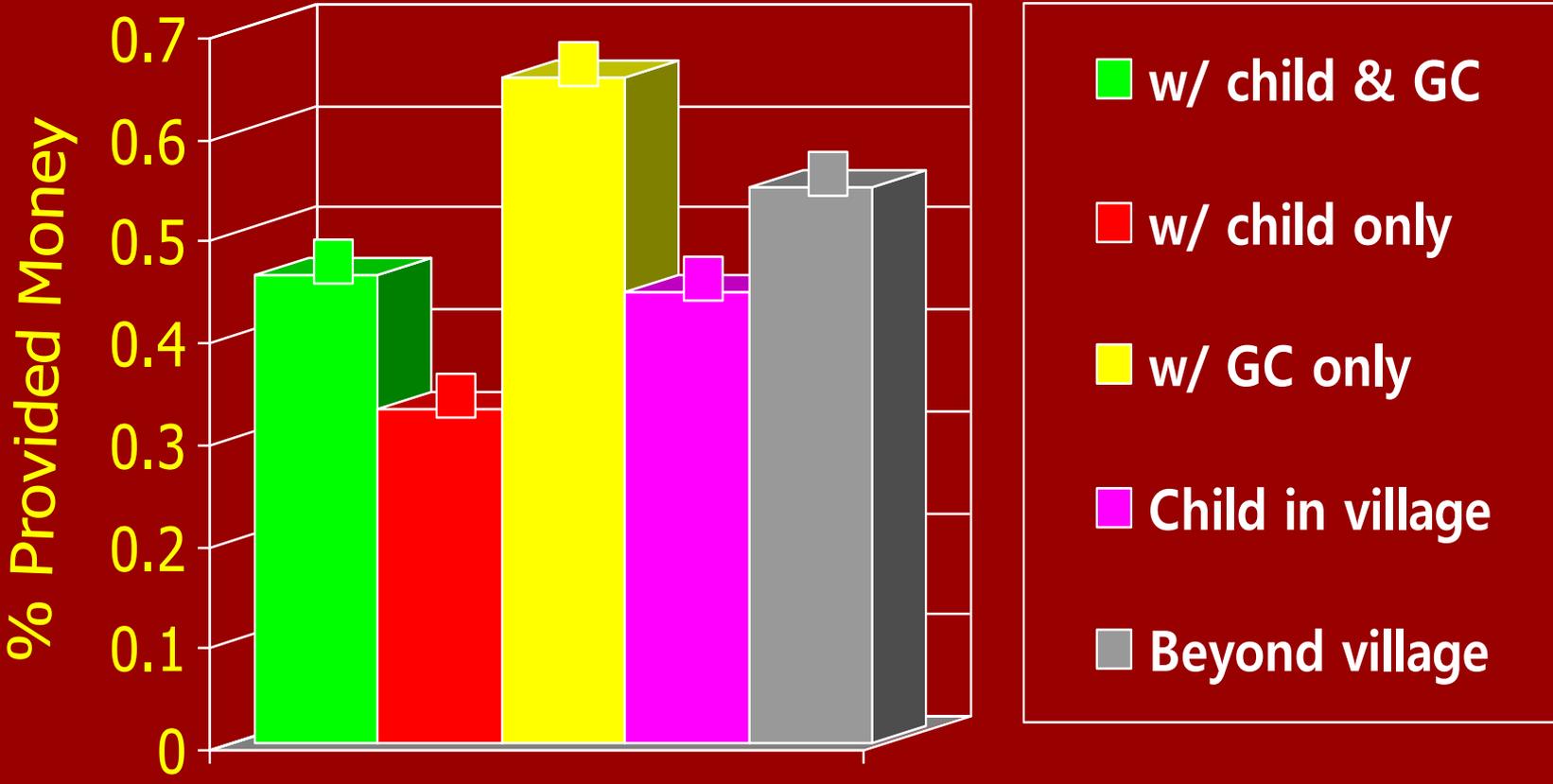
# Intergenerational Arrangements by Cognitive Impairment (N=1,698)



# Intergenerational Arrangements and Money Received from Children



# Intergenerational Living Arrangements and Money Provided to Children



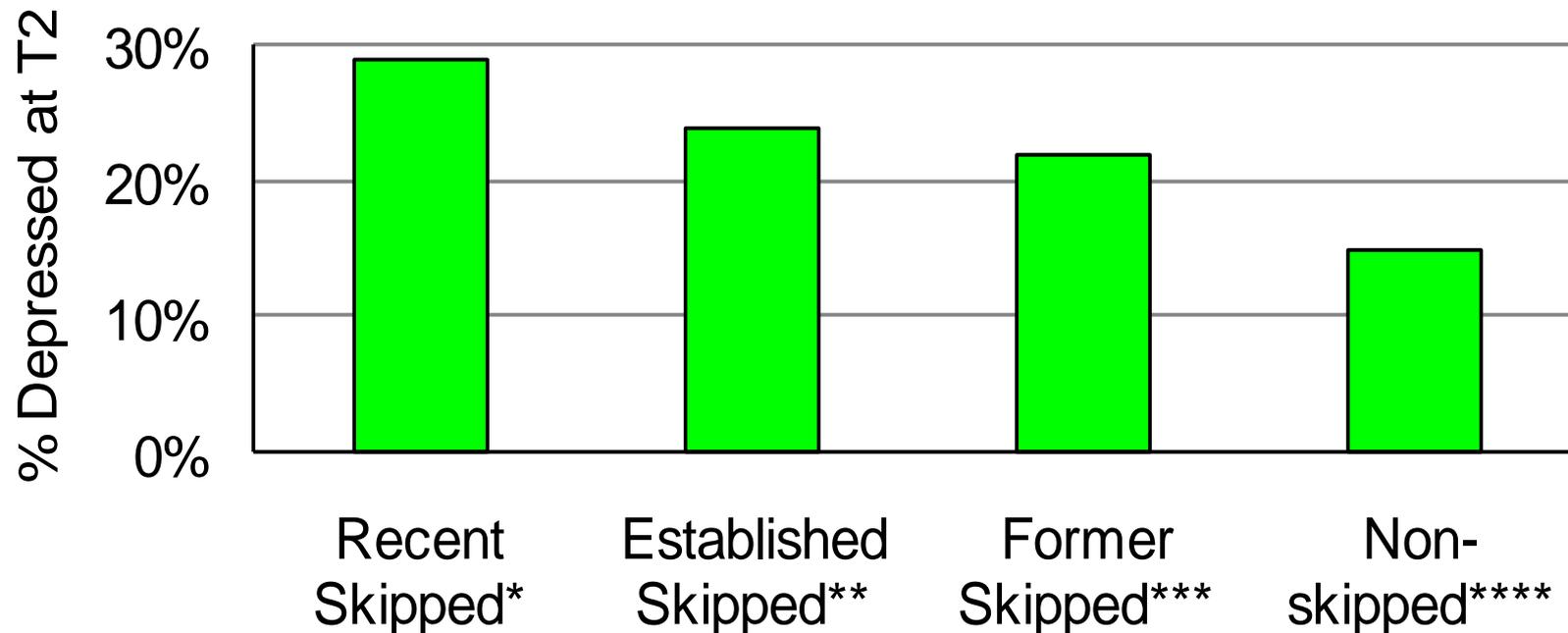
# Grandparent Caregivers in China

- How do grandparent caregivers in China differ from caregivers in the U.S.?
  - Reasons for care (need vs. strategy)
  - Selection into role (involuntary vs. voluntary)
  - Support from middle-generation (little vs. money/visits)
- How might these differences influence the well-being of grandparent caregivers in China?

# Depression among Grandparent Caregivers in U.S.

- Grandparents predisposed to high rates of depression.
- High levels of stress associated with care itself.
- Often little/no support from middle generation.

U.S. Grandparents Who Recently Entered Skipped Generation Households are *Most* Likely to be Depressed (Source: *Health and Retirement Study*)



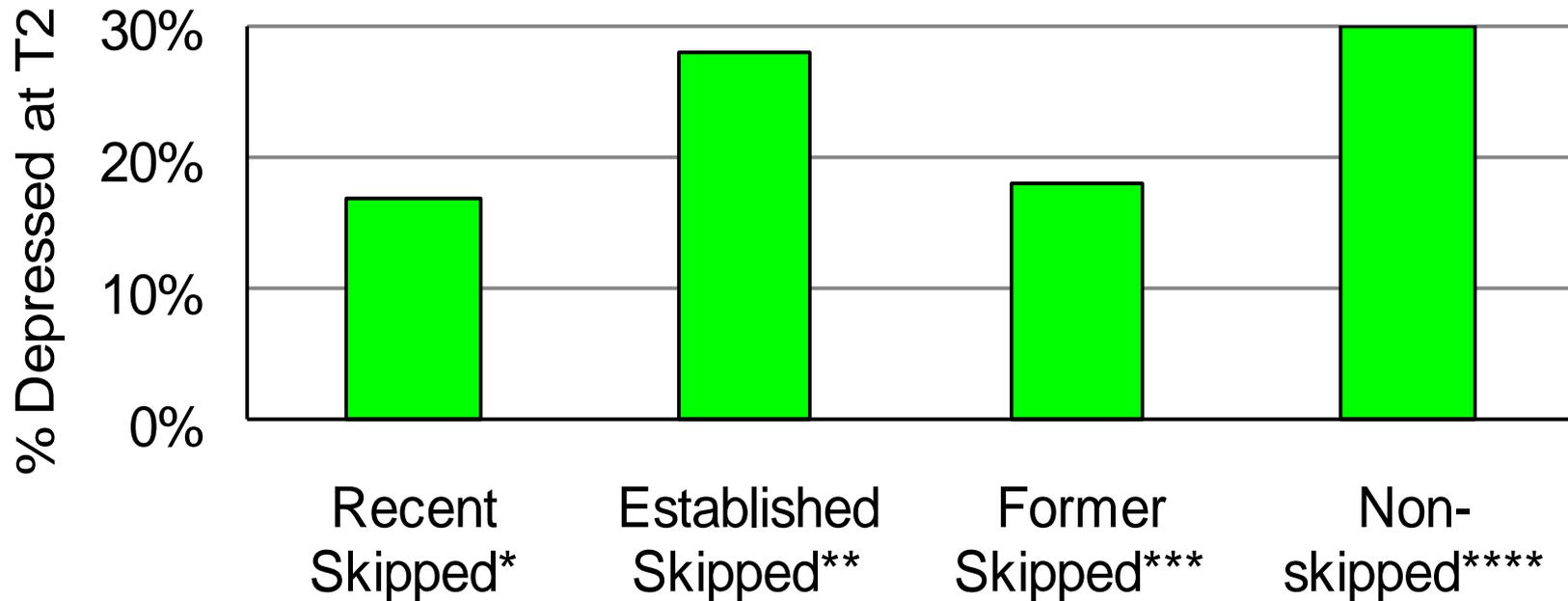
\*Entered skipped household between T1 and T2

\*\*In skipped household at T1 and T2

\*\*\*In skipped household at T1 and not at T2

\*\*\*\*Not in skipped household at T1 and T2

Rural Chinese Grandparents Who Recently Entered Skipped Generation Households are *Least* Likely to be Depressed (*Source: Older People in Anhui Province*)



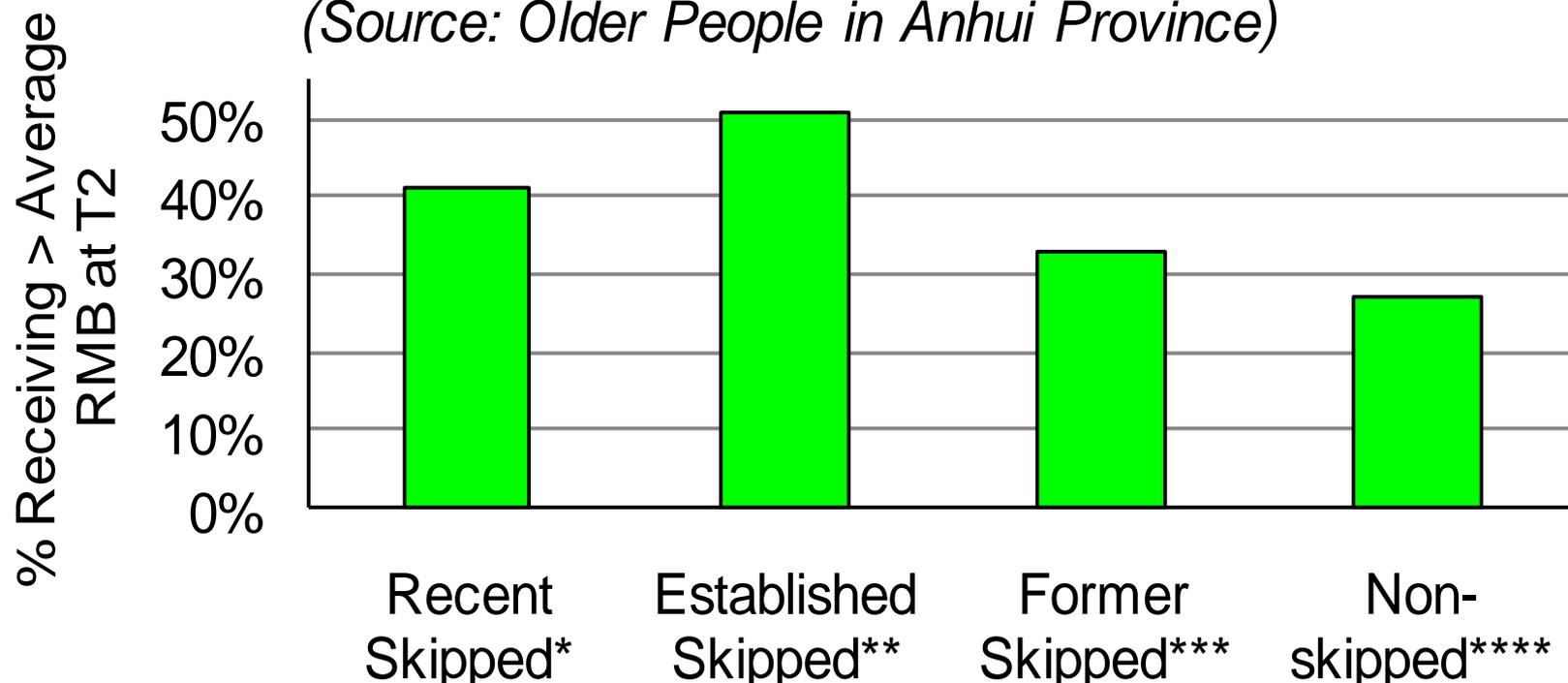
\*Entered skipped household between T1 and T2

\*\*In skipped household at T1 and T2

\*\*\*In skipped household at T1 and not at T2

\*\*\*\*Not in skipped household at T1 and T2

Rural Chinese Grandparents in Skipped Generation Households For More than Two Years Receive Financial Support from Children Most Frequently  
(Source: *Older People in Anhui Province*)



\*Entered skipped household between T1 and T2

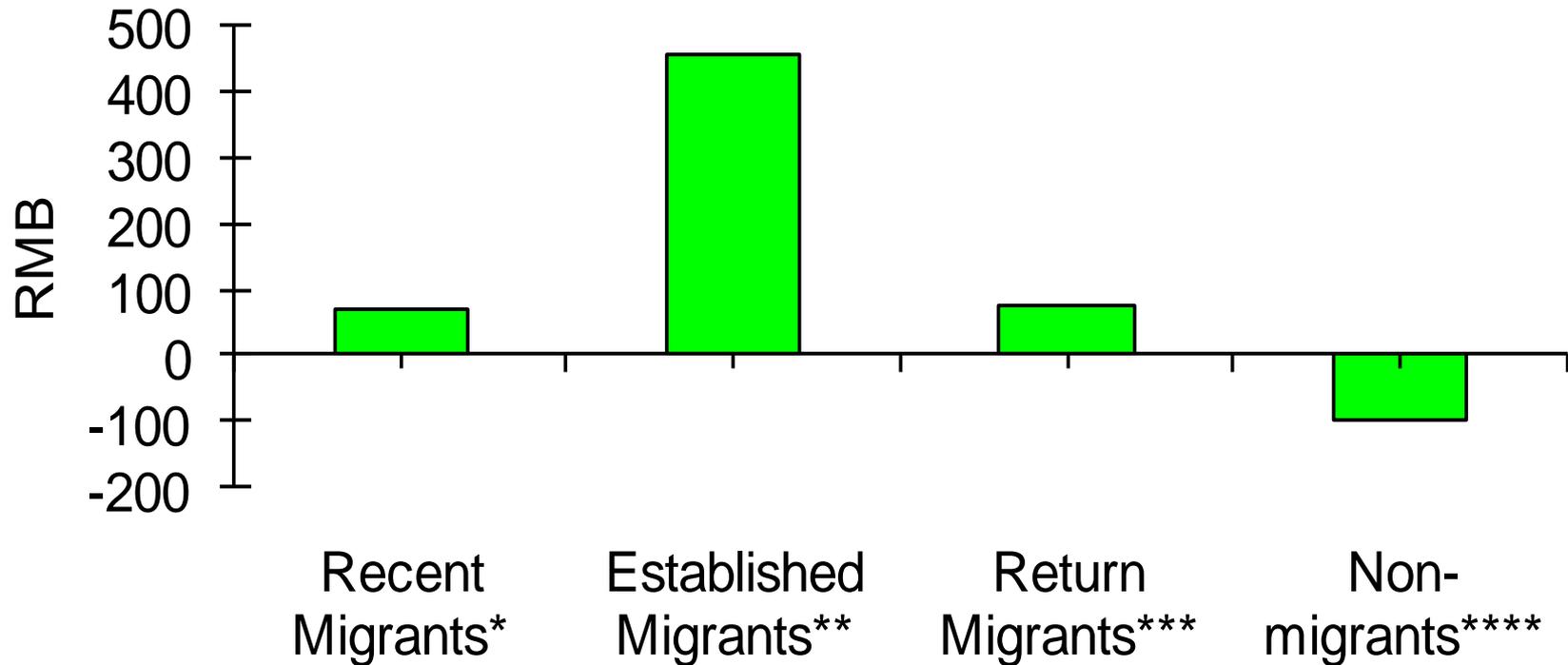
\*\*In skipped household at T1 and T2

\*\*\*In skipped household at T1 and not at T2

\*\*\*\*Not in skipped household at T1 and T2

- Caring for grandchildren in rural China is tied closely to migration of children and remittances.
- Do older parents receive *increased* monetary support from migrant children compared to other children?

## Change in Amount of Money Children Provided Older Parents by Child's Migration Status (2001-2003)



\*Recent migrants = migrated between T1 and T2

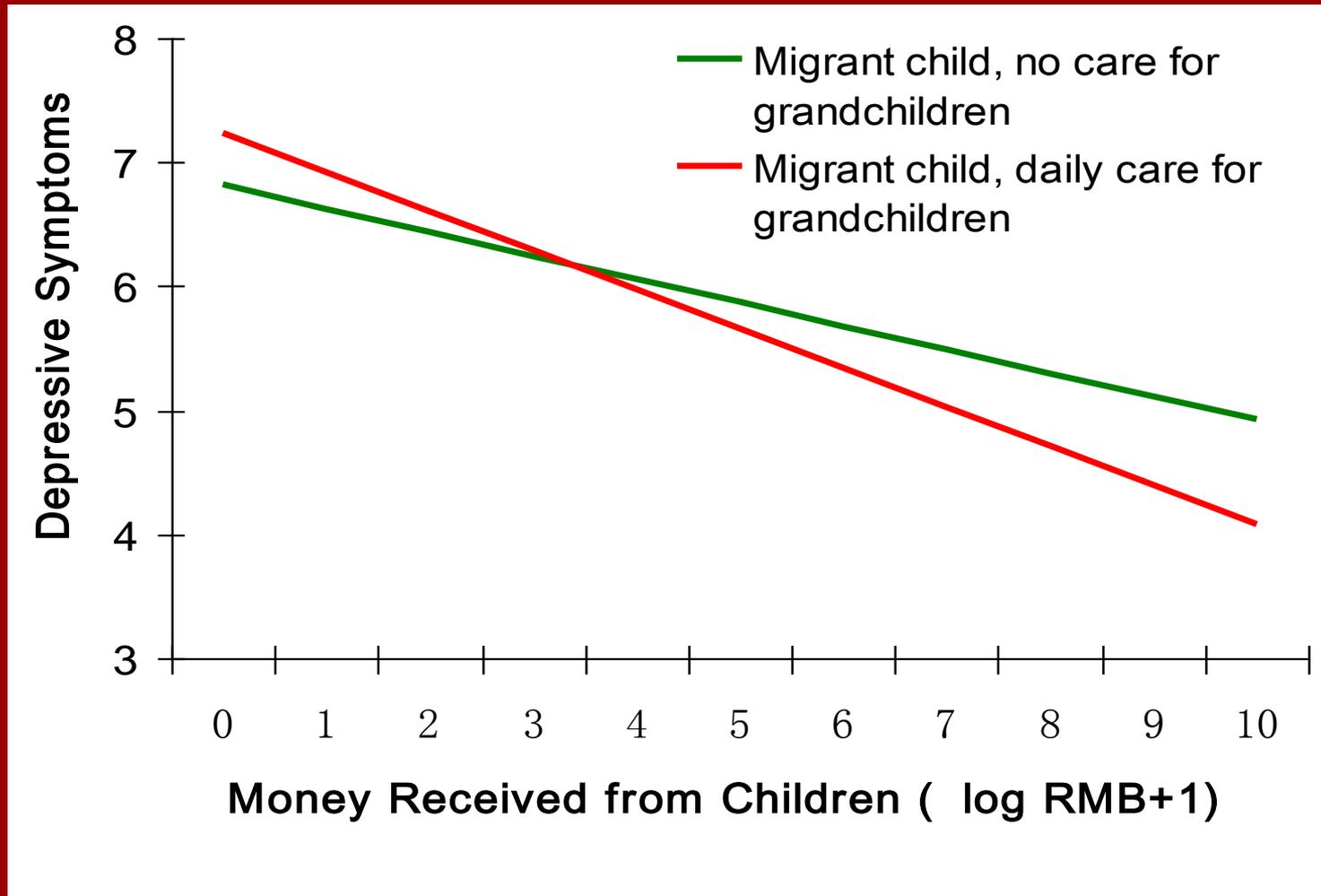
\*\*Established migrants = migrant at T1 and T2

\*\*\*Return migrants = migrant at T1, returned at T2

\*\*\*\*Non-migrants = non-migrant at T1 and T2

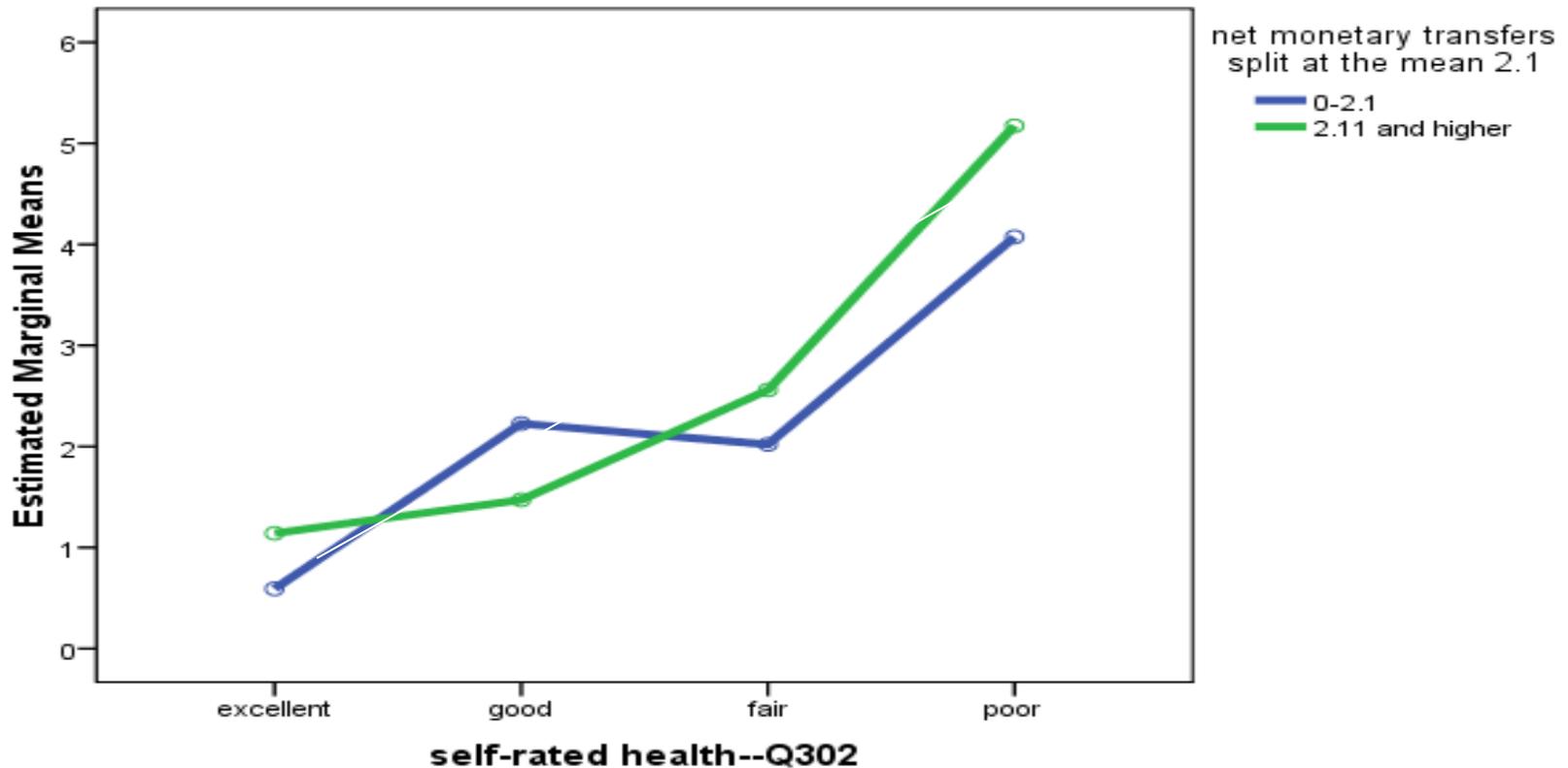
- Do caregiving grandparents benefit from financial support from migrant children?
  - Depression
  - Health care service utilization

# Remittances from Migrant Children Reduce Depressive Symptoms in Caregiving Grandparents



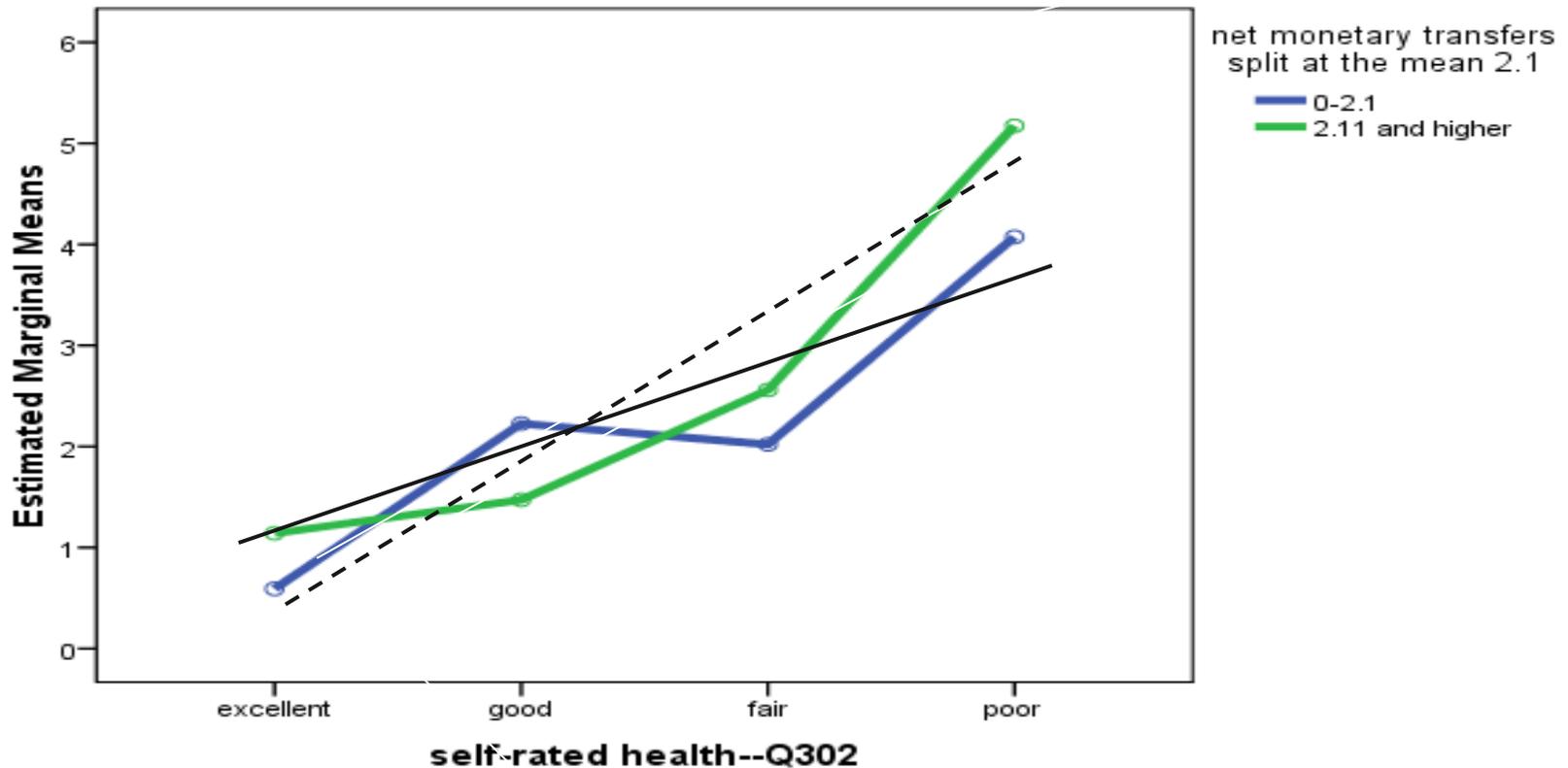
# Remittances from Migrant Children Allow Elderly Parents in Poor Health to See the Doctor

Estimated Marginal Means of outpatient service use--Q310



# Remittances from Migrant Children Allow Elderly Parents in Poor Health to See the Doctor

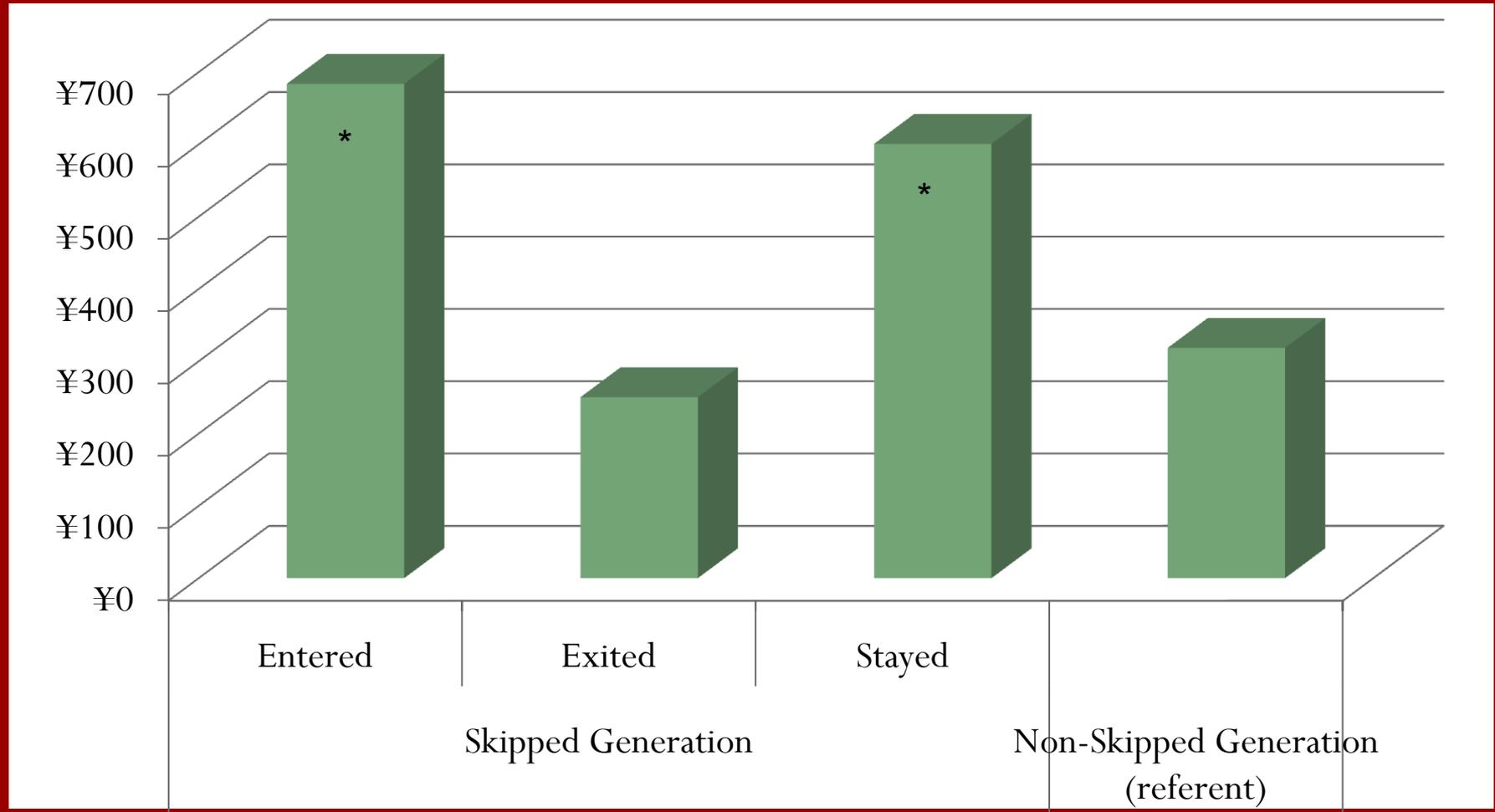
Estimated Marginal Means of outpatient service use--Q310



# Grandparent Caregivers in China

- How may grandparent caregivers be advantaged?
  - Reasons for care
  - Resources before entering role
  - Support from middle generation
  - Activity, self-efficacy, purpose, executive function

# Change in financial support from children (T1-T2)



# Does Living in Skipped Generation Household Improve the Well-being of Grandparents

- This association may be explained, at least in part, by
  1. The pre-transition resources of the grandparent (selection),
  2. Financial support provided by children
- Longitudinal regression analysis is performed to assess the relationship between the generational structure of household (IV) and subsequent well-being (DV), controlling for grandparent resources and financial support.

# Data

- Four waves of Longitudinal Study of Older Adults in Anhui Province, China
- Uses all four waves, collected in 2001, 2003, 2006, & 2009.



# Data Structure

- Data from four waves pooled into person-period records (robust SE to account for clustering).

ID	Generational structure	Transition Period		
		2001/2003	2003/2006	2006/2009
11107	Non-SG	X		
11107	Non-SG		X	
11111	Non-SG	X		
11111	Entered		X	
11111	Exited			X
11210	Exited	X		
11210	Entered		X	
11210	Stayed			X

# DV– Depressive Symptoms

- Depressive symptoms at Time 2
  - Range= 0-18
  - Cronbach's alpha = .78
- Nine questions derived from Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CESD)
- Adapted from Study of Health & Living Status of the Elderly in Taiwan (Hermalin, 2002)

# IV– Generational structure of household

Sample Size		
	Respondent	Transition
<b>Skipped Generation</b>	370	1,036
Entered	101	291
Exited	142	368
Stayed	127	377
<b>Non-Skipped Generation</b>	1,146	2,111

# Grandparent Intervals In and Out of Skipped-Generation Households

- Data from first three waves pooled to assess transitions in skipped-generation household status.
- Household status:
  - New Skipped-Generation Caregivers (N=194)
  - Former Skipped-Generation Caregivers (N=214)
  - Long Term Skipped-Generation Caregivers (N=224)
  - Non- Skipped-Generation Caregivers (N=1324)

# Control Variables – Correlates of Skipped Generation Living

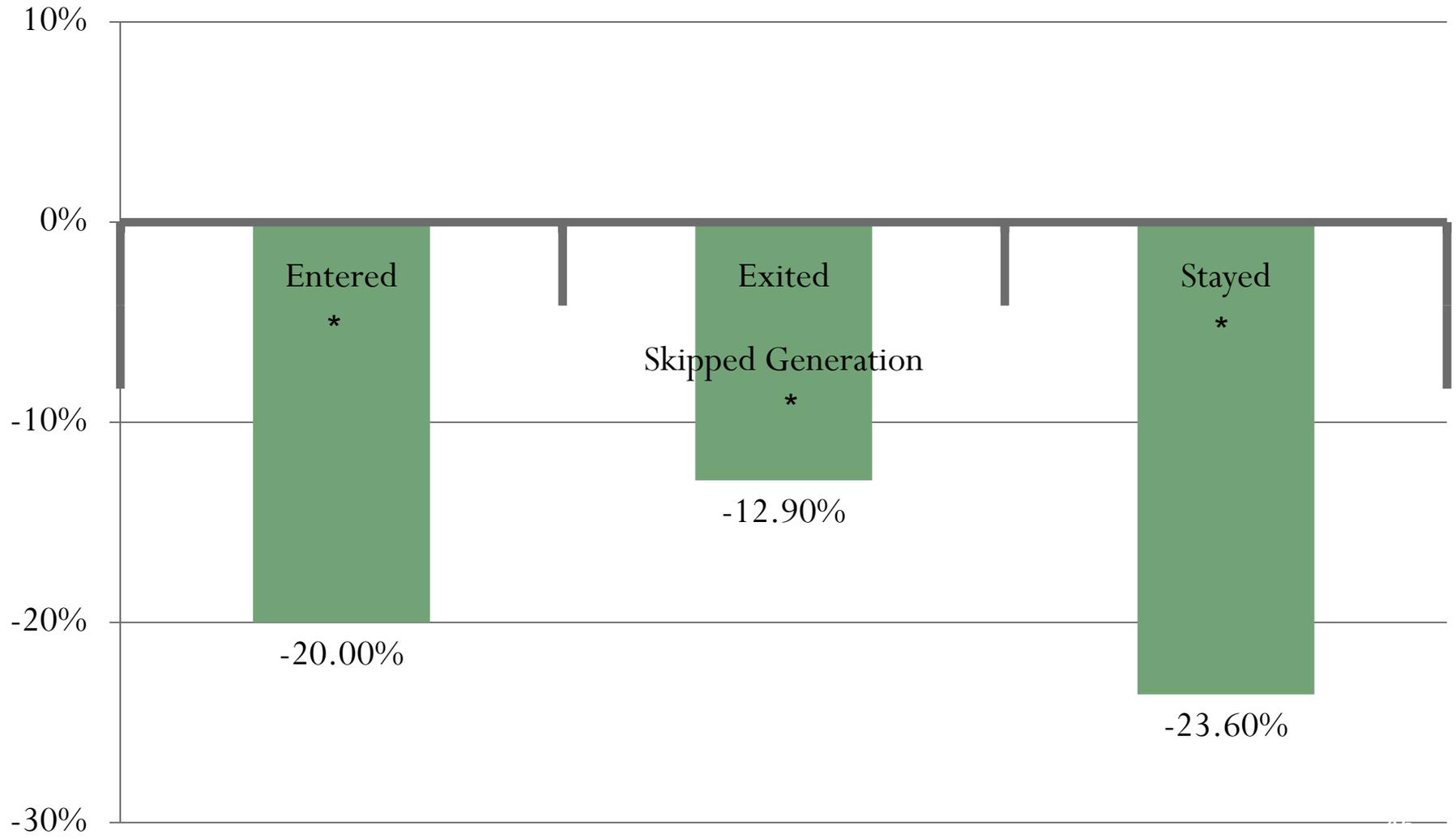
- **Pre-transition resources**
  - Depressive symptoms T1
  - Age in years
  - Marital status
  - Education
  - Personal income
  - Functional Limitations
  
  - + Gender
  - + Number of grandchildren
  - + Age of youngest grandchild
- **Post-transition benefits**
  - Total financial support from children T1
  - Change in total financial support between T1 and T2

# Analysis

- Sample consisted of respondents with grandchild(ren) younger than 16 years.
- Negative binomial regressions
  - IV – generational structure of household; DV – Depressive symptoms
- Covariates added in stages
  - Model 1=No controls
  - Model 2=Adds personal pre-transition resources
  - Model 3=Adds financial support from children

# Model 1: No Controls

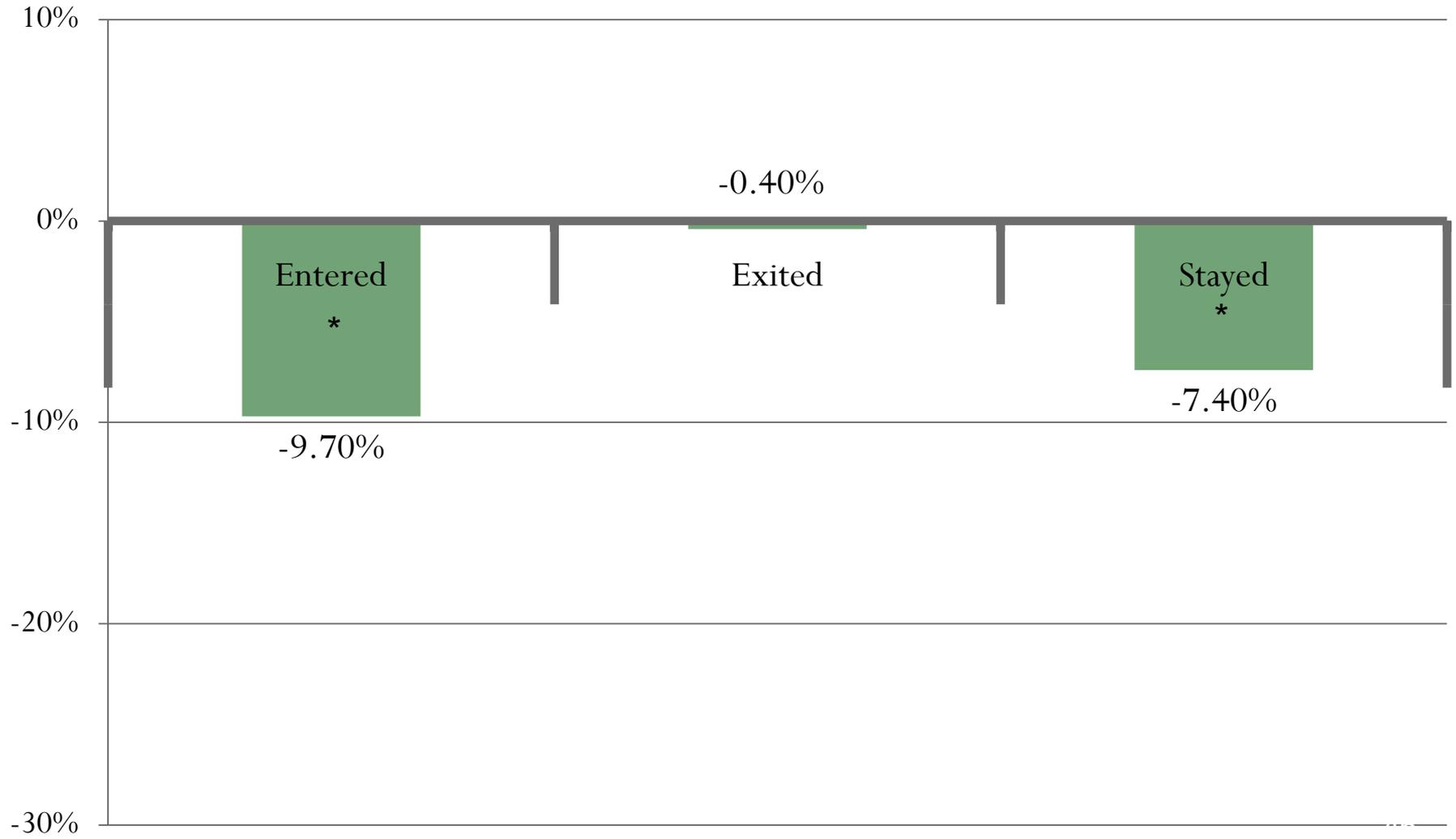
Expected Count of Depressive Symptoms in Skipped-Generation Households as Compared to Non-Skipped Generation Households



p < .05.

# Model 2: GP Resources Controlled

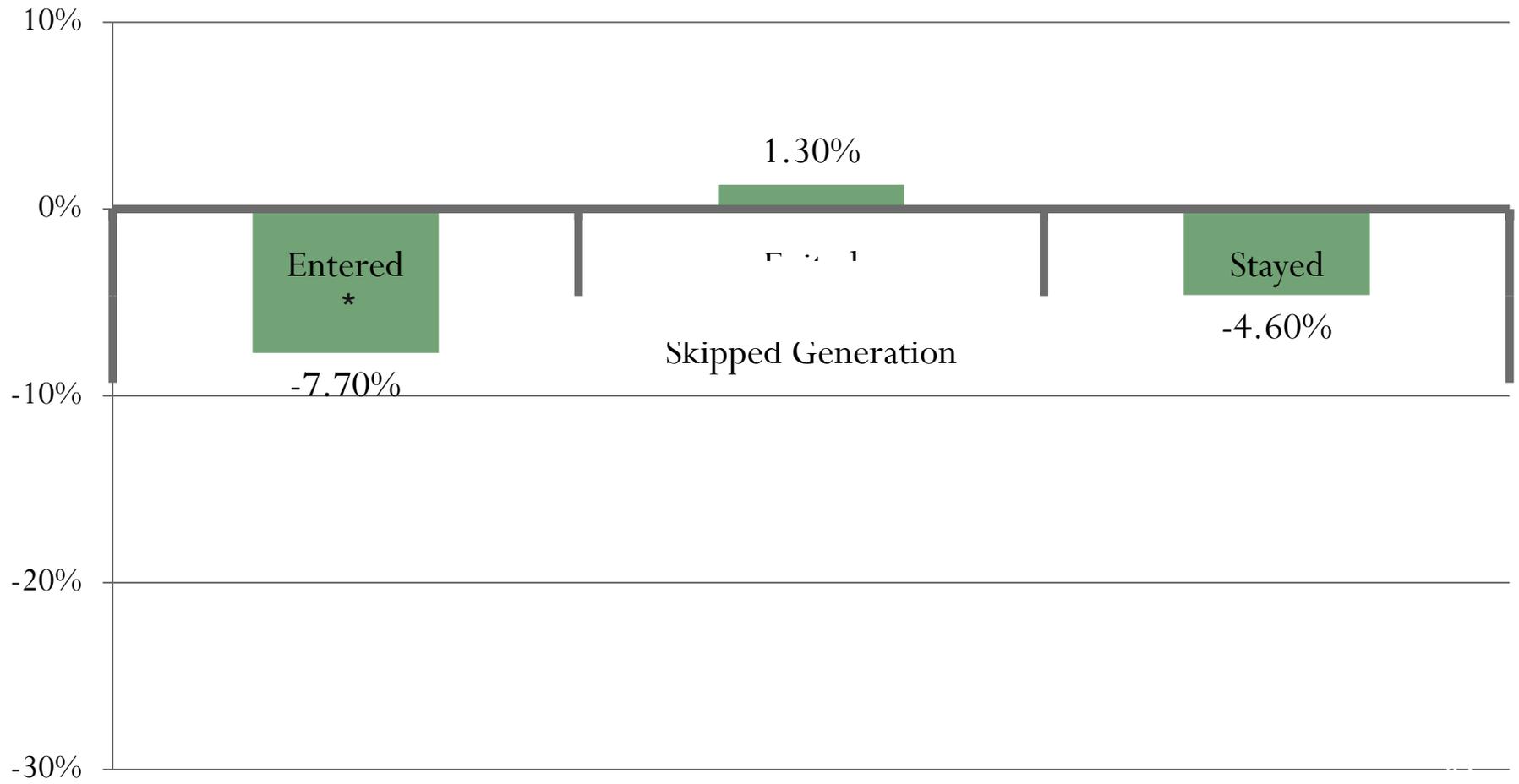
## Depressive Symptoms in Skipped-Generation Households as Compared to Non-Skipped Generation Households



p < .05.

# Model 3: Financial Support Controlled

## Depressive Symptoms in Skipped-Generation Households as Compared to Non-Skipped Generation Households



p < .05.

# What about cognitive problems?

## No growth effects over eight years

		Cognitive Impairment			
		No Controls		Controls Added	
		Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
<b>Intercept</b>		1.448***	.055	.036	.465
	Grandparent Care				
	Daily Care	-.239**	.079	-.154*	.077
	Less than Daily Care	-.298***	.084	-.183*	.081
	No care (reference)	----		----	
<b>Slope</b>		.047**	.250	-.342***	.089
	Grandparent Care				
	Daily Care	-.024	.016	-.011	.014
	Less than Daily Care	-.007	.017	.011	.015
	No care (reference)	----		----	
<u>Controls</u>					
Age	Chi-Square (D.F.)	30.164*** (9)		53.703*** (23)	
Female	CFI	.968		.970	
Married	RMSEA	.041		.031	
Any Education					
Income (Logged)					
Number of Grandchildren					
Age of Youngest Grandchild					

# Conclusions

- Grandparent caregivers in rural China have higher levels of well-being as compared to non-caregivers.
- Much of this is associated with positive selection into the caregiver role.
- Financial support provided by children also plays a role.
- Caregivers who have recently transitioned into the caregiving role still seem to show an increase in well-being

# Implications

- The context of caregiving is highly shaped by the circumstances surrounding care.
- We must be careful not to over-generalize what we've learned about these grandparents, as this is a unique population with unique needs and characteristics.
- Family is highly adaptive – caregiving may help to integrate older adults who would otherwise be isolated from their families (unlike in U.S.).

# National Grandparenting Policies in China

- Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China (2001) stipulates that:  
“Grandparents who can afford it shall have the duty to bring up their minor grandchildren whose parents are dead or incapable of providing support.”

# Provincial Policies: *Report from Anhui Province*

- In skipped-generation families:
  - “**Children** have lower academic performance, tend to be unsociable and lack communication skills, have safety concerns since the grandparents are too old to take care of them.”
  - “**Grandparents** have low quality of life since they are also responsible for agriculture work, have low education levels that make it difficult for them to tutor younger grandchildren, are very poor, and live a dull life.”

# Provincial Policies: *Report from* Anhui Province

- Local governments should encourage:
  - Establish service to help skip-generation families; for example, specific schools for younger children raised by grandparents
  - Provide job training to surplus work force so sons don't need to migrate to cities to find employment.
  - Increase government funding for rural elderly pension system
  - Develop community-based activities to enrich older adults' daily lives.

# Finally

- Are grandparents the “unsung heroes”, the foundation on which China’s economic boom rests—more than a problem to be solved?

# Acknowledgments

- Co-authors – 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
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