

For some older Chinese-Americans, caring for grandchildren can enhance well-being and ease anxiety, stress

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Up until now, little has been known about how helping care for grandchildren might affect the well-being of older adults who are Chinese-Americans. Researchers recently considered that question in a study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

The researchers looked at information from the "Population Study of Chinese Elderly (PINE)," which examined more than 3,000 Chicago-area Chinese-Americans aged 60 and older between 2011 and 2013. The [participants](#) answered questions to screen for depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, and other factors affecting their health and well-being.

In the study, 35 percent (818) of the participants said they were caregivers for children and spent an average of about 12 hours a week on childcare.

To measure the level of caregiving pressure they experienced, participants were asked "How often do you feel pressured...to take care of [your [grandchildren](#)]?" The participants answered questions about caregiving burdens, and whether they felt their own health was at risk due to caregiving. Researchers also determined how much positive or negative social support the [grandparents](#) received from family and friends.

The researchers discovered that 80 percent of the participants believed

that caring for grandchildren was not a burden. Most participants reported never feeling pressured by their adult children and didn't experience any negative effects from caregiving. These grandparents were generally happier, and felt much less depression, anxiety, stress, and loneliness compared to [older adults](#) who didn't care for grandchildren.

Specifically, people who didn't care for grandchildren compared to those who did were:

- 40 percent more likely to have symptoms of depression
- 20 percent more likely to feel anxious
- 10 percent more likely to have stress
- 60 percent more likely to feel lonely

However, grandparents who felt pressure from their [adult children](#) and who believed that they had no choice about providing care for grandchildren reported having higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress than people who didn't feel pressured. The grandparents who had negative feelings about caregiving reported a 50 percent increased rate of depression symptoms, 30 percent higher stress rates, and a 70 percent increase in loneliness.

"Caring for grandchildren can be a burden, a blessing, or both. Enjoy the time with your family and grandchildren—just be in control of how much time you spend caregiving," said study co-author Fengyan Tang, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh.

Caregivers' feelings partly depend on their perception of the experience, as well as on how they are treated by their family and by the community. Both formal and informal support systems and healthcare services are key to helping older grandparents maintain their psychological well-

being, the [researchers](#) noted.

More information: Fengyan Tang et al, Psychological Well-Being of Older Chinese-American Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.14455](#)

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