



Xiang Li, a 5-year-old boy accompanies with his parents to go to visit the museum in Suzhou, China.

Photoed by Yijie Ding

---

# **A Childless China: Investigating Attitudes Toward Parenting**

**Suzhou Experimental High School AP Center**

**Yao Lu   Yiran Lu   Yan Ru**

**Jietong Shen   Yijie Ding   Zhenghao Lu**

**July 18 2018**



Jinjin He, a novice mother of the twins, accompanies with her children to go to lunch on the street in Suzhou, China.

Photoed by Yijie Ding

---

## Introduction

The girl called Zihan Wu was the first interviewer in our research and was the most impressive one during the whole process. We met her in the cafe and she showed extremely negative emotions towards reproduction and having children. She was a student and was just a few years older than us high school students. When she was asked about did you want to or had the trend to have children, she was definitely shocked and told us “No way, I will never have a child! That's annoying!” As the first interviewer of our research, she was quite suitable for our research topic, which related to the fear of giving birth to the next generation. And that's what we called Tokophobia, a phenomenon is prevailing in our society and daily life.

The Chinese government used to hold very strict limitation of birth, in order to control the population. But recently the government carries out the totally opposite action, allowing the couples to have more than one children. Though it seems to work as the function of lifting the population, it actually does the opposite, the birth rate in China declines by about 5.7%, even more than it did in the past.

Most of the Chinese young people on the Internet claim the same idea that “I can hardly afford the cost of having a baby, both financially and emotionally. Besides the cost, I am also not quite willing to have a baby, I can not even care for myself that well, how can I have the courage to care for my baby? The stress from outside society has already made me very tired, I don't want to have a baby to become another burden to drive me mad in my life.”



Xiaoping Zhou, a businesswoman from Hunan who has a child, goes to Suzhou for a business trip with her son in China.

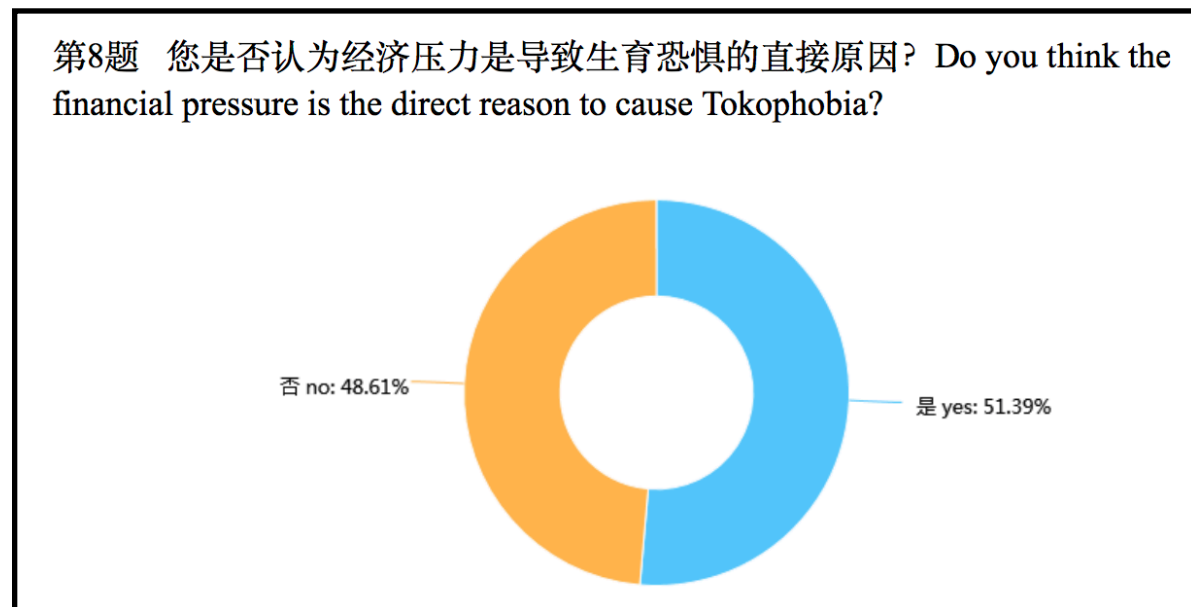
Photoed by Yijie Ding

---



## Evidence

The declination of birth rates and the unwillingness of parenting in countries like China is related to various factors. And we found that one important factor is the financial stress. According to Gajanan in 2017 from Money Magazine, the author stated that “For a middle-income family to raise a child born in 2015 through the age of 17, the cost of rearing a child has hit \$233,610, according to the report from the Department of Agriculture. The price jump is a 3% increase from the previous year, with housing taking up a bulk of the expense at 29% of the cost.” From the statistic, we could further understand the point. And one question from our survey also illustrates this issue in specific data about heavy financial stress in our daily life in China. Over half of the population regards financial pressure as the direct reason to cause Tokophobia in China.



Financial reason from the respondent remains the key problem of the fear of having children, accounting for over 50%.

Source: Results from Yiran Lu and Yan Ru's questionnaire on Tokophobia

---

After we knew what the current situation was, we started to make the questionnaire by ourselves to make sure that this phenomenon surely exists and influences the society. We set the questions into two parts, the basic information for the respondents and how much they know about

Tokophobia. After a period of time, we got the result and the result showed that this phenomenon did exist. The result is not beyond our expectations, as the development of modern technology and society, more and more people face the pressure of life, undoubtedly, more and more people would have negative emotion towards parenting.

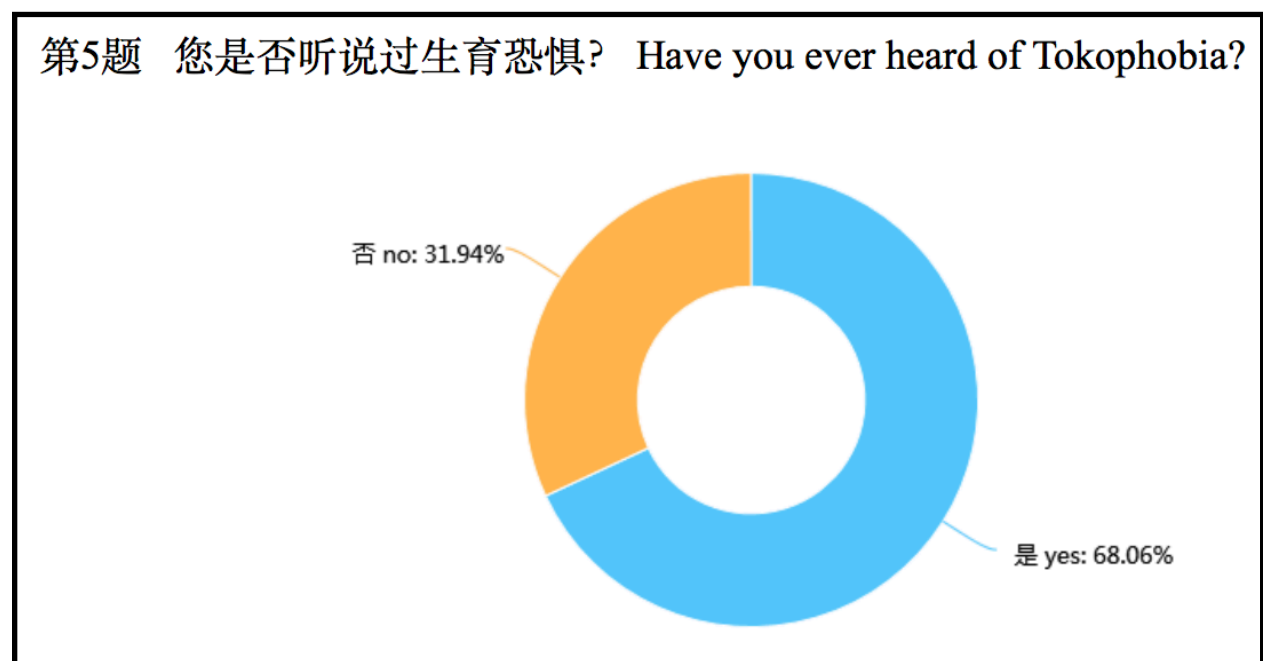
In order to start our research, we choose Guanqian Street, the busiest marketplace as our research target place due to the diversity of people. The date we chose was July 14th during the summer holiday and the time period we selected was at noon because during this period Guanqian Street contains the largest amount of visitors.

We surveyed Zihan Wu, a student who was having a drink at the Starbucks as our first respondent. We surveyed her about the questions that included “Do you want to have a baby in the future?” “Do you think having a baby will make you happy?” and “Do you think most of the young people nowadays are afraid of having babies?”. The answer to each question is “No, definitely no, no way.” “Happy? Are you kidding me, I would rather study all day if I have to have a baby, it’s so embarrassing and will surely make me tired.” “Yes, sure they have. Because of their parents’ willing and financial reason.”

After interviewing with Wu, we changed our location and we selected our new place at Suzhou Center, another very busy place but far away from the previous one Guqian Street. And then we interviewed Juhua Zhang, a 60-year-old woman with her daughter and granddaughter, hanging out here. We survey her about questions included “Do you think it makes you feel happy that your daughter decided to have a baby?” “What’s your opinion towards having a baby?” and “Do you think your daughter will be happy when she knows she has a baby?” The answer to each question is that “Sure it was, I feel very glad to have a baby, you see, I have my daughter, and now my daughter also has a daughter, a pretty nice family!” “Well, to this question, I think having a baby is the responsibility of a woman, women are designed for this, I hope you can also have your baby in the future!” “Sure my daughter is happy, although taking care of the baby is a little bit tiring, it makes us all feel happy because we can see him grow!”

Through these two respondents, we got the information that there will be a huge opinion difference between different generations. The old generation tends to be more positive towards having a baby, but the new generation mostly dislikes that very strongly.

Besides what we discover above, we also made the small conclusion that Tokophobia is not a very rare term and issue in our life. Almost 70% of our respondents knew this term, only a small fraction of the respondents have no idea what is this. And there is also a huge conflict about this term. We cannot make sure what the whole society think about this term and our plan is to enlarge the scale of our interview and keep doing the investigation on the impact of the issue.



Popularity of the term “Tokophobia” and people who heard of it, accounting for about 68.06%.

Source: Results from Yiran Lu and Yan Ru's questionnaire on Tokophobia

---

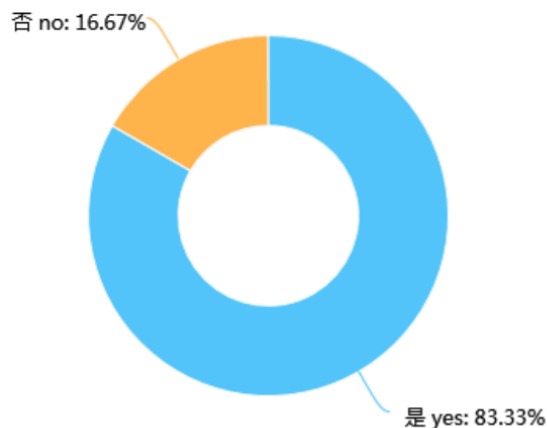
As the interview and investigation carried on, our information and data are also becoming more and more comprehensive. As time goes by, we find that people’s opinions are also different from

the past. Now more and more people agree that people don't need children necessarily, children are not a necessity in their current situation. What's more important is that, when we asked people if they would accept some people's idea of not having children or not, most of them replied yes, which means that even though a person chooses not to have a child, he or she will still not be seen as an exception in the society. This phenomenon shows that nowadays the society has a stronger social containment.

## Conclusion

As a result, we can get a brief view towards parenting in the society. Most people who are not willing to have a baby usually age young. Or they have a really harsh life pressure, and they simply believe that babies will make their life more difficult. But the group of people who really want to have a kid mostly ages above 25, the concept of family and responsibility to raise a kid was widely built among them.

第12题 您是否认为互相理解是解决问题的一个很重要的因素? Do you think respect is a very important element to solve the problem?



“Respect” as the attitude towards the issue of Tokophobia and people who agree with respecting each other, accounting for about 83.33%.

Source: Results from Yiran Lu and Yan Ru's questionnaire on Tokophobia

---

Furthermore, we found that respect and understanding are two important elements to solve a lot of social problems, like Tokophobia. Before solving the conflict, people have to understand the ideas of the other side and try to understand their opinions. There is never absolutely right or wrong in the world, only pro or con in different positions holding the various opinions. After understanding the idea, people should respect the ideas of the other side. Arguing or fighting on this issue won't help solve them, only worsen the problem. The only rule people should follow facing others' opinions is respecting each other. Eventually, with the improvement of modern society and new thoughts from different generations, there will be less and less bias and prejudice in the society. And we are going to make the society a better place for everyone.