

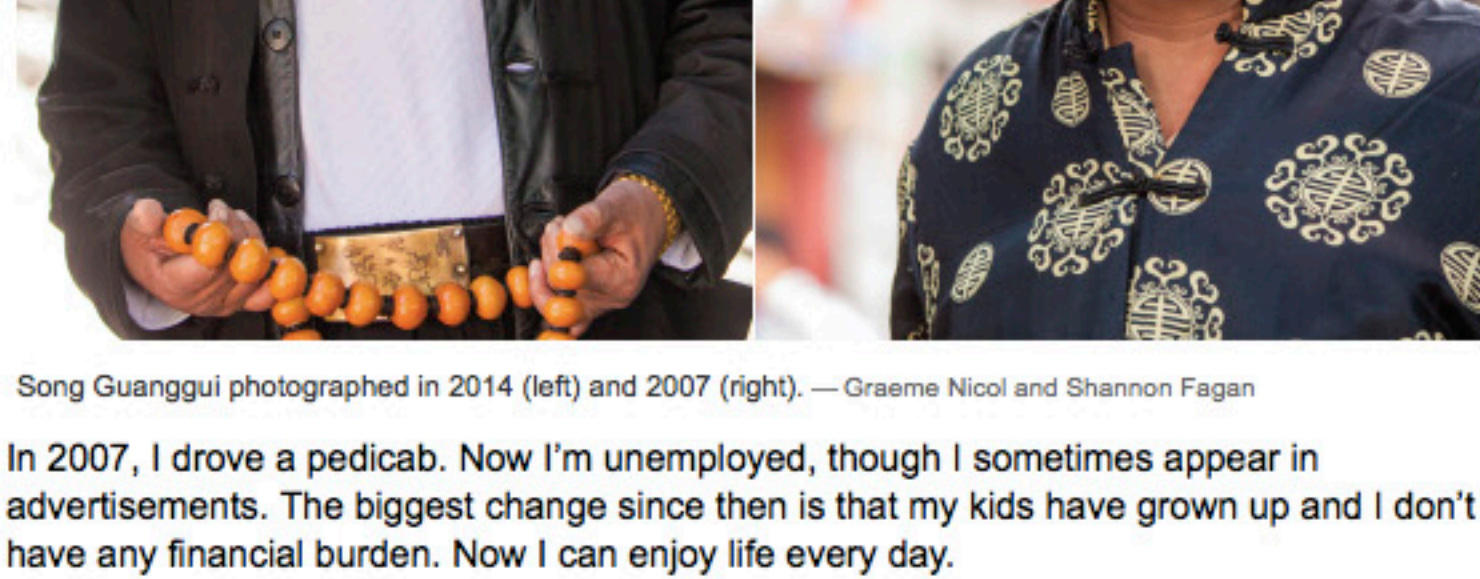
## Then and Now, in Photos: How the Lives of 9 Beijingers Have — and Haven't — Changed



Judged by its skyline, Beijing is a city in constant and rapid flux. But what about the lives of those who toil in the shadow of the city's skyscrapers?

In 2007 and 2011, photographer **Shannon Fagan** stopped passersby on Beijing's streets and offered them free portraits. This fall, another photographer, **Graeme Nicol**, tracked down some of those impromptu models to photograph them again, and to ask them how their lives and views of the future had changed.

Their answers painted a picture of self-discovery and shifting expectations as varied as the architecture that has sprung up around them.

**Song Guanggui, Beijing, 54 years old**

Song Guanggui photographed in 2014 (left) and 2007 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

In 2007, I drove a pedicab. Now I'm unemployed, though I sometimes appear in advertisements. The biggest change since then is that my kids have grown up and I don't have any financial burden. Now I can enjoy life every day.

Seven years ago, I was very confident in my future. All I had to do was work hard to pay my children's tuition. Now I don't have to worry about anything. I'm older — all I want is to be healthy and happy.

**Mo Shaokun, Hebei Province, 29 years old**

Mo Shaokun in 2014 (left) and 2011 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

I have been working in advertising the whole time. Three years ago, I had no clear plans for the future. Although I don't hate the advertising industry, now I know I'm more interested in psychology and I'm planning to learn more about it. Maybe I'll switch jobs in the future.

The big change is I broke up with my boyfriend. Now I know myself better.

**Zhang Hui, Beijing, 38 years old**

Zhang Hui in 2014 (left) and 2011 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

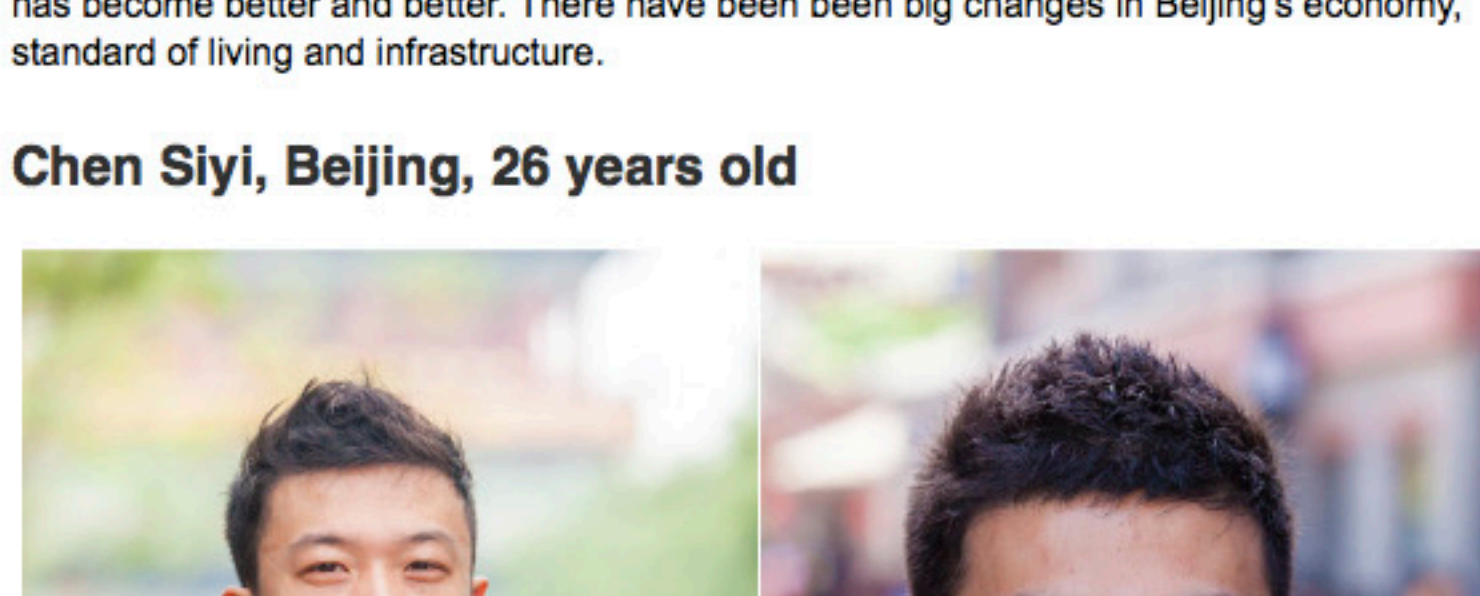
Three years ago, I was unemployed. Now I'm a cab driver. Back then, I hoped I could live a decent life and have a happy future, but it's hard. Now I just want to find a better way to make money, work hard to support my family and prepare for my life after retirement.

Nothing much has really changed in the last three years. Generally speaking, I'm materially better off than I was before and the older I get, the more at peace I am with myself.

**Zhu Gengyin, Beijing, 64 years old**

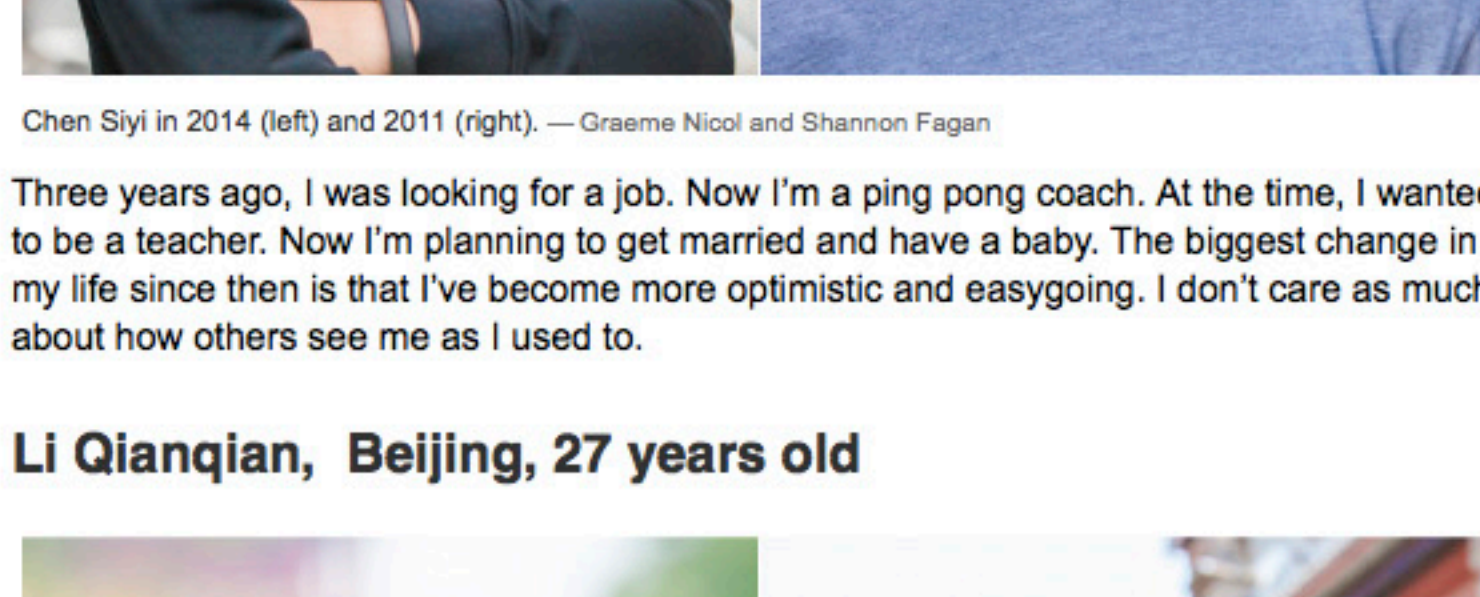
Zhu Geyin in 2014 (left) and 2011 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

In 2011, I had just retired. When I had just retired, I wasn't quite used to it. I am now. Back then, I only had a foggy notion of my future and had to play it by ear. Now I hold pretty much the same attitude, but since [Chinese President] Xi Jinping came to power, China has become better and better. There have been big changes in Beijing's economy, standard of living and infrastructure.

**Chen Siyi, Beijing, 26 years old**

Chen Siyi in 2014 (left) and 2011 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

Three years ago, I was looking for a job. Now I'm a ping pong coach. At the time, I wanted to be a teacher. Now I'm planning to get married and have a baby. The biggest change in my life since then is that I've become more optimistic and easygoing. I don't care as much about how others see me as I used to.

**Li Qianqian, Beijing, 27 years old**

Li Qianqian in 2014 (left) and 2011 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

I was a doctor when the first photo was taken. Now I'm a secretary. Three years ago, I was young and didn't have any notion of my future, but now I know I want to start my own company and become a boss. Patient-doctor relations are so fraught these days, and as a military doctor, there wasn't much room for me to develop. I'm the sort who likes making arrangements for others, so working as a secretary suits me quite well.

**Hao Wennian, Beijing, 57 years old**

Hao Wennian in 2014 (left) and 2011 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

I was working in human resources at the time of the first photo and still am. Three years ago, I hoped I'd be able to work until I was 60, but now my biggest hope is that my family can be safe and at peace.

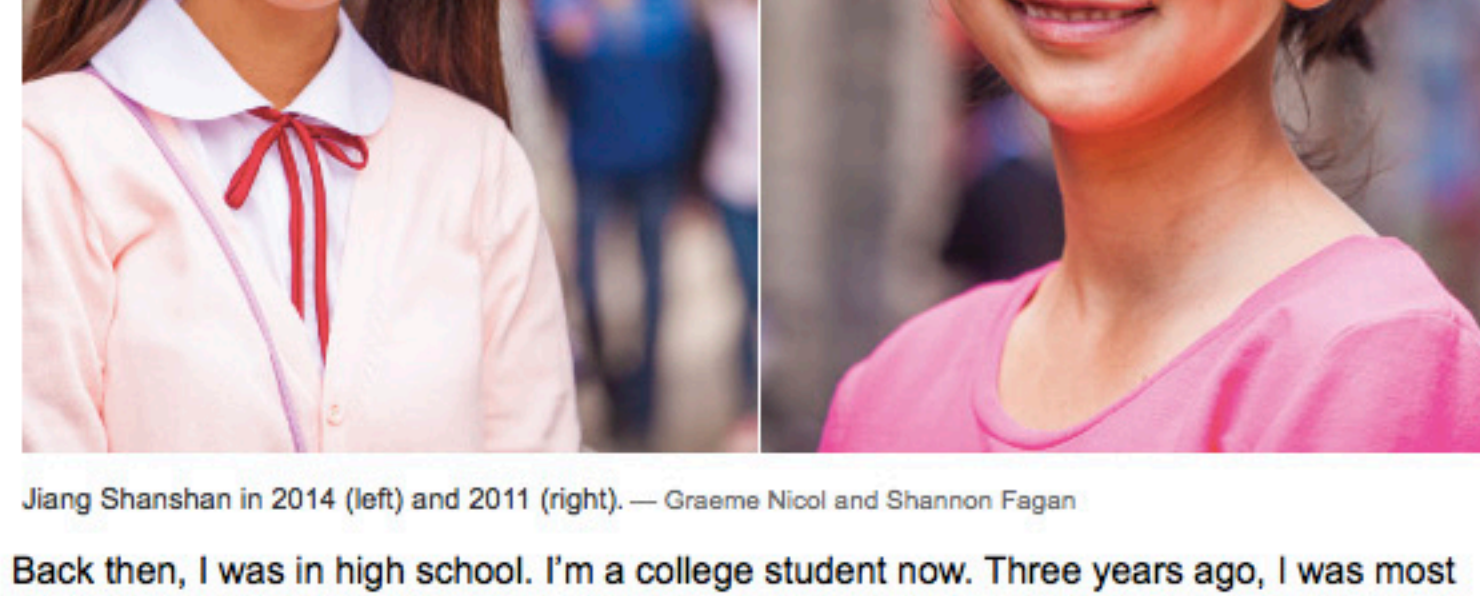
I've become fond of traveling recently. Now that my children are grown and independent, I'm free of domestic duties. I have more time and energy to hang out and travel with my friends.

**Jiang Shanshan, Beijing, 18 years old**

Jiang Shanshan in 2014 (left) and 2011 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

Back then, I was in high school. I'm a college student now. Three years ago, I was most worried about the college entrance exam and obsessed with getting a high score. Now I want to learn skills that will help me land a good job.

I'm now involved in different social circles. That is the biggest change. Previously, I knew only my classmates, but now I interact with people who've already started working, all kinds of people.

**Jing Ya, Henan Province, 30 years old**

Jing Ya in 2014 (left) and 2007 (right). — Graeme Nicol and Shannon Fagan

Seven years ago, I was a Web editor. Now I'm new media product manager. Back then, I didn't expect to stay long in Beijing but now, surprisingly, I'm still here and likely to stay here for a long time. In 2007, I didn't have a clear plan for my future, but now I know exactly what I want.

I was full of ideas about my future then, but I didn't know what it would really be like. Now I know that I can only realize one idea. I'm more practical and just want to enjoy every day to its fullest.

— Ma Si contributed to this project