

BUSINESS



A staff member takes care of an elderly at a nursing home in Rizhao, East China's Shandong province, on May 25. GUO XULEI / XINHUA

Aging population sparks need for medical escorts, hospital aides

With children living far away, elder medical care becoming commonplace

BELJING — On an early morning in August, a woman surnamed Li was waiting at the entrance of a top-tier hospital in Beijing for a hired medical escort who would provide her with the help needed during her hospital visit that day.

With her children living in other cities, 65-year-old Li, who has difficulty moving around, has come to rely on such professional services and has used them several times as they help her navigate the many procedures of seeking medical treatment at the hospital. “The procedures are complicated. I simply can’t manage it myself.”

Li’s case is not unique. A woman surnamed Wang, who lives and works in Beijing, said hiring medical escorts for her parents is a serious need. “Both of my parents are over 80 years old. Because my siblings and I are all busy at work most of the time, we need to hire medical escorts for our parents when they need to see a doctor.”

As Li received help from her escort at the Chinese PLA General Hospital in Beijing, a nursing aide at a local hospital in East China’s Shandong province was helping a patient turn

over, drink water and stay calm in the hospital ward — tasks that once fell to family members.

The rise in demand for medical escorts and nursing aides across various cities is part of a service industry that has been rapidly gaining traction in China in recent years, giving rise to the so-called “companion economy”.

This demand has in part been driven by an aging population. By the end of 2024, citizens aged 60 and above had reached over 300 million, accounting for nearly 22 percent of the country’s total population. Almost half of them live alone without children immediately nearby, according to official data.

“Older patients often struggle with digital registration, multi-step medical procedures, and navigating large hospitals,” said Xu Jianzhong, executive president of the China Association of Social Welfare and Senior Service.

A 2025 report launched by the association revealed that more than 80 percent of home-dwelling seniors lack timely family assistance during hospital visits. Against such a backdrop, Xu observed that medi-

cal escort services have transitioned from peripheral demand to rigid demand over the years.

Beyond medical escorts, companion care is also filling gaps in daily life support. With around 35 million disabled elderly people — a number expected to rise to 58 million by 2050 — the need for professional at-home and institutional care is surging in the country.

At the other end of the spectrum, young people in China are also embracing paid companionship to meet their emotional and recreational needs. Online advertisements for companion services had in fact appeared years ago across social platforms, offering a range of emotional support services, from chatting and exercising to dining and museum visits.

Major tech platforms, such as JD.com, Meituan and Alibaba, have entered the functional companionship market, offering structured services like elder escorting and nursing care.

As paid companionship is reshaping how people seek help and connect in a society with diversified needs, it is nurturing a companion economy expected to reach a market size of 50 billion yuan (\$7 billion) by the end of 2025, according to an estimate by Sinolink Securities.

But as platform models enable rapid scaling, service quality control, as well as potential risks and trust issues, remain challenges to the development of the companion economy, analysts say. The low entry barrier and lack of regulations mean there is potentially false advertising, poor services and privacy leaks, leaving users vulnerable.

Efforts to standardize these services, particularly medical escort services, are underway. In May, the CASWSS released a systematic set of standards for elderly hospital escort services covering service processes, safety guidelines, personnel training and complaint mechanisms.

In big cities such as Beijing, Wuhan and Shanghai, a number of elder care service institutions have established comprehensive standards for medical escort and nursing services. By combining personnel training, qualification reviews, feedback mechanisms and digital tracking, these organizations aim to enhance service quality and accountability.

“Caregiving isn’t just about helping with meals or movement. It requires professional knowledge,” said Wang Shuxia, head of the China Home Service Association.

XINHUA

Surging demand driving China’s used-car exports

By HAN JINGYAN
hanjingyan@chinadaily.com.cn

China is revving up the used-car export market, which saw over 400,000 units being shipped to more than 160 countries and regions in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Europe last year, becoming a new engine for automotive consumption and industrial upgrading.

Speaking on Aug 22 at the Used-Car Export Ecosystem Summit 2025 in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, China Automobile Dealers Association Vice-President Luo Lei affirmed that China is entering a golden era for used-car exports, driven by both policy support and surging demand.

With motor vehicle ownership exceeding 400 million units in the country, a mature supply-chain system and a portfolio of highly cost-effective models, China has a solid foundation, he said.

However, to overcome overseas market barriers, collaborative teamwork — with government guidance, pioneering enterprises and association empowerment — is imperative to build a standardized, globally oriented service system and a more competitive worldwide used-car circulation network, Luo said.

Industry experts said that thanks to the pilot program launched in 2019, China’s used-car export market has already achieved numerous breakthroughs, but still needs the dedication and synergy of every industry stakeholder to play their part in taking it to the next level.

As a co-organizer of the summit and a key participant in China’s used-car export sector, CAR Inc sent its CEO Gao Dewu to share the company’s export achievements: “Since our launch last year, we have leveraged 29 domestic used-car central warehouses and five pre-port warehouses to establish six overseas direct-sales offices.”

“Our real-time inventory of 4,000 vehicles now reaches more than 30 countries across the Middle East, Central Asia, North and West Africa, and Latin America,” Gao said.

“Through our export practice, we have come to see that reliable vehicle sources are the cornerstone of any ecosystem while transparent information is the bridge of trust,” Gao added, stressing that “China’s global competitiveness must shift from ‘price advantage’ to ‘brand trust’.”

To this end, he said, CAR Inc has built an end-to-end capability covering high-standard pre-sale refurbishment, global logistics and localized after-sales support — from inspection, maintenance and cross-border transport to overseas warranties — creating an efficient and reliable cross-border service system that helps its partners enhance

their global competitiveness.

Li Jia, vice-president of CAR Inc, said its three strategic pathways are vital — going global with a direct-sales network in six key countries to cover over 30 neighboring markets; resource integration with domestic institutional suppliers to share overseas opportunities; and promoting the transition of non-standard used cars to standardized products to strengthen market trust.

A core outcome of the summit was the official launch of the “Institutional Vehicle Source Export Task Force” — a member organization under the CADA Used-Car Export Sub-Committee.

Jointly led by CADA and CAR Inc, the founding members comprise 23 original equipment manufacturers, seven financial leasing companies, five rental and mobility firms and three dealers — covering the entire value chain from vehicle supply and financing to circulation services.

With extensive experience gained through the opening-up of many industries, China’s ability to organize industrial collaboration and successful supply chain flows will play a key role in the future of the nation’s used-car export sector.

Speaking on behalf of the core initiator, Li noted: “Our goal is to weave dispersed institutional vehicle sources, technologies and channel resources into a single network, shifting the country’s used-car exports from ‘solo battles’ to ‘joint voyages’ and jointly building an overseas reputation that makes China the preferred source for bulk procurement.”

“Only by incorporating every link — production, usage, circulation and export — can China’s used cars travel far and stand firm in global markets,” emphasized Gao, adding that “CAR Inc is committed, alongside industry peers, to rooting ourselves in real market demand and growing toward our shared aspirations.”

Li stressed that for the export task force, four strategic areas have been identified.

“First, building vehicle-source standard to promote ‘quality at value, and quality going-global’, and second, establishing product standards to offer convenient transactions based on bulk supplies that are ‘same model, same first-registration year, same condition grade, and same mileage band,’” he said.

“Third, boosting transparency, and last, joint construction of a comprehensive overseas service system to ensure long-term sustainable export operations,” Li added.

Li noted that CAR Inc will continue to leverage its core advantages in vehicle sources, technology and services, collaborating with partners across the value chain and jointly establishing a “high-quality and trustworthy” brand image for Chinese used cars worldwide.

Working together for shared prosperity

