

A question of ageing, Ardern's shock exit and a shorter working week

It's an age-old question: how do we adjust to our elderly societies? Japan has faced such realities for a while now, but the challenges are becoming increasingly common across much of the world where families are getting smaller, and people are living longer.

Even India - which will soon overtake China as the world's most populous country - is seeing an older demographic become more prevalent in some states. The countries of sub-Saharan Africa, meanwhile, look most likely to enjoy the benefits of a younger population as the century progresses. For this week's big story, Emma Graham-Harrison and Justin McCurry assess what ageing populations hold in store for the world. And Verna Yu reports on the reasons why many young people in China seem reluctant to start families.

Of related interest, don't miss Tania Branigan's fantastic long read on China's Cultural Revolution, how it scarred and shaped a nation - and why some of those who survived it now look back on the era with a kind of affection.

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Red or dead [Page 34](#) →

Jacinda Ardern's resignation as New Zealand's prime minister last week shocked the world of progressive politics. Our Aotearoa New Zealand correspondent Tess McClure reflects on Ardern's groundbreaking leadership and why she felt the time was right to step aside.

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Have you been working too hard? If so, turn to Richard Godwin's thoughtful piece on whether the four-day working week, a long-mooted solution to balancing out our lives, may finally be coming of age.

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On the cover

Ageing societies are fast becoming a global phenomenon. "We are in transition across the 21st century and need to adjust to this age-structural transition, rather than fight it," says Sarah Harper, professor of gerontology at the University of Oxford. "So that every generation, every cohort, more or less replaces itself."

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