

Minicase 1.4

China's ageing population

China has been emerging from under-development and widespread poverty to become a major economic superpower with rapid economic growth. It has for a generation enforced quite strictly a one-child policy in order to control population growth in what is the world's most populous country. The impact of this is to create an aging population: the 4-2-1 problem where each child often has two parents and four grandparents. Not a problem in many respects but what will this mean in time to come? China remains a relatively young country – median age is about 30 – but rapidly aging. The dependency ratio, that is the number of old and young as a proportion of the number of working-age adults, is currently low – there aren't so many children any more. However, it is now increasing and will by 2050 be as high as in 1975. The big difference is that whereas most dependants in 1975 were children (about 85+ percent) with only about 15 percent of dependants being old adults, in 2050 about 65–70 percent of dependents will be old-aged adults. The trend has begun. In 2015, almost without doubt now, almost 50 percent of all dependants will be older people – by 2020 it will be over 50 percent (unless the one child family policy is rescinded).

Questions

- 1 How do the needs of older people differ from those of the young?
- 2 What is the likely impact of these changes on families, organisations and government?

Case study questions

1. How do the needs of older people differ from those of the young?

2. What is the likely impact of these changes on families, organisations and government?

❖ **For the second question let's think about two scenarios:**

1. China did relax the child policy from 2015 allowing married couples to have up to 2 children and from 2022 up to 3 children.

2. China did not relax the child policy and all the couples are allowed to have only 1 child.

❖ Answer the second question for each scenario.