

THE CONSTELLATIONS OF DEMOGRAPHY FACT SHEET

TRACING THE GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF AGE GROUPS

The world's population has grown from about 2.5 billion in 1950 to 7.5 billion now and is expected to rise to 9.7 billion by 2050. But countries are experiencing demographic change at different rates and it is important to understand which places are likely to have the largest absolute numbers of children, potential workers, or those typically retired or needing care.

This fact sheet illustrates the size of these demographic groups across continents and countries and over time, as if comparing the dimensions of stars and planets.

By using circle area to represent population size and applying a ranking over time, we trace the constellations of the most staggering global demographic shifts in modern history. These will have implications for the patterns of production and consumption, investment and interest rates, and social and diplomatic institutions.

Some countries' total populations are expected to have peaked and will decrease in rank (Chart 2). These include Russia, Germany, Japan, and China. But the story becomes more complex when we look at age groups separately.

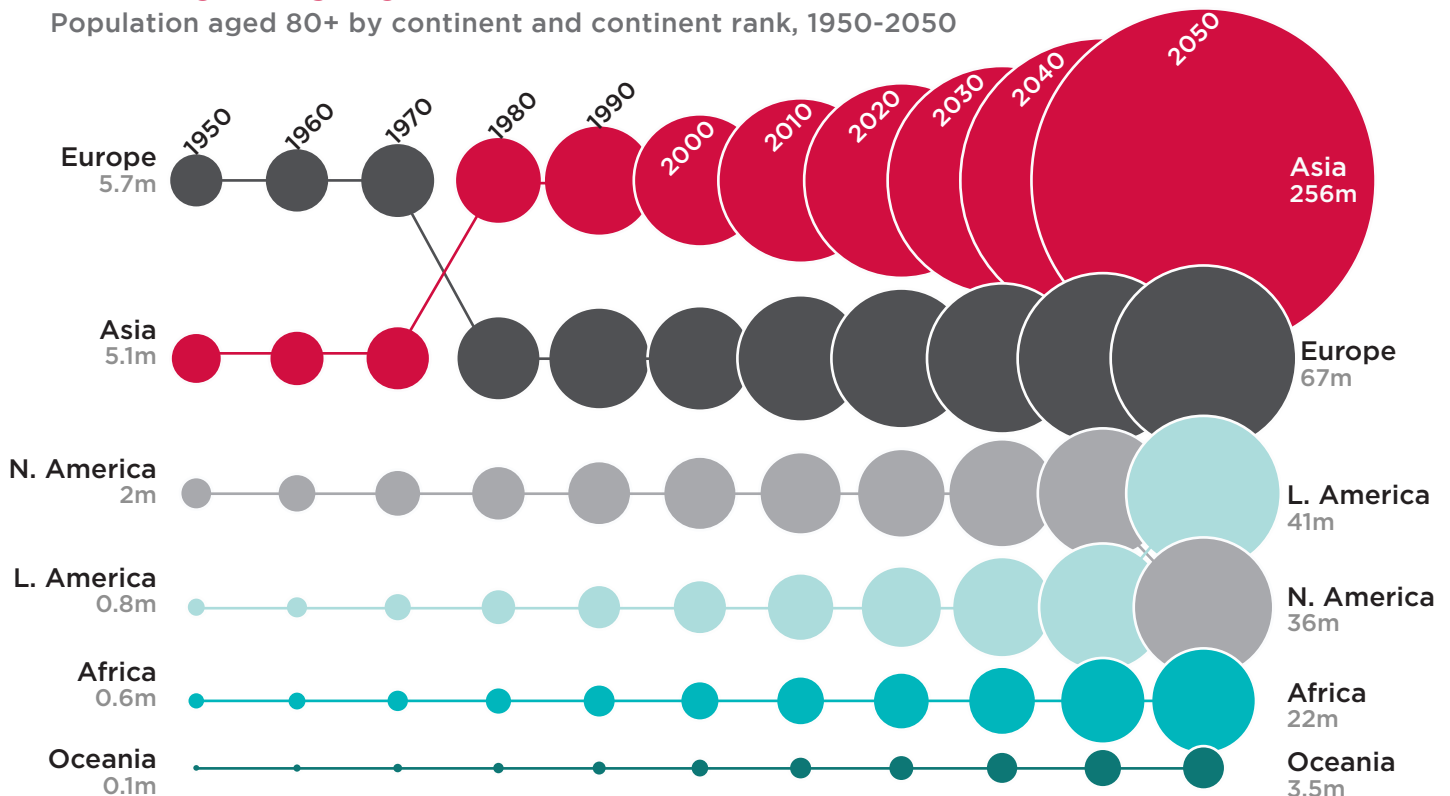
Take those aged 80+, the most likely group to require care. Their population was about 14 million in 1950 and is now 125 million. By 2050, it is projected to be 430 million. The majority will reside in Asia, but every region will see a rapid increase (Charts 1 and 6). Indeed, even as European countries see soaring retirement-age populations (Chart 5), Asian countries will replace them at the top of the aged-population-size rankings. For example, Indonesia currently has fewer people of retiring age than either Italy or Germany but within a generation it is expected to have more than both of these countries put together.

By 2050, India and China will still have the largest child and working-age populations (Charts 3 and 4) but higher fertility in Africa will see its countries rise in the child- and working-age-population rankings. Nigeria can expect a larger potential workforce than the US. In Europe, only Russia and the UK are expected to feature in the top 25 countries by size of their working age population.

In each case, it is instructive to compare the rankings: Australia is not featured among the top 25 with respect to total population (it ranks about 50th), yet it is within the top 25 when it comes to those aged 80+.

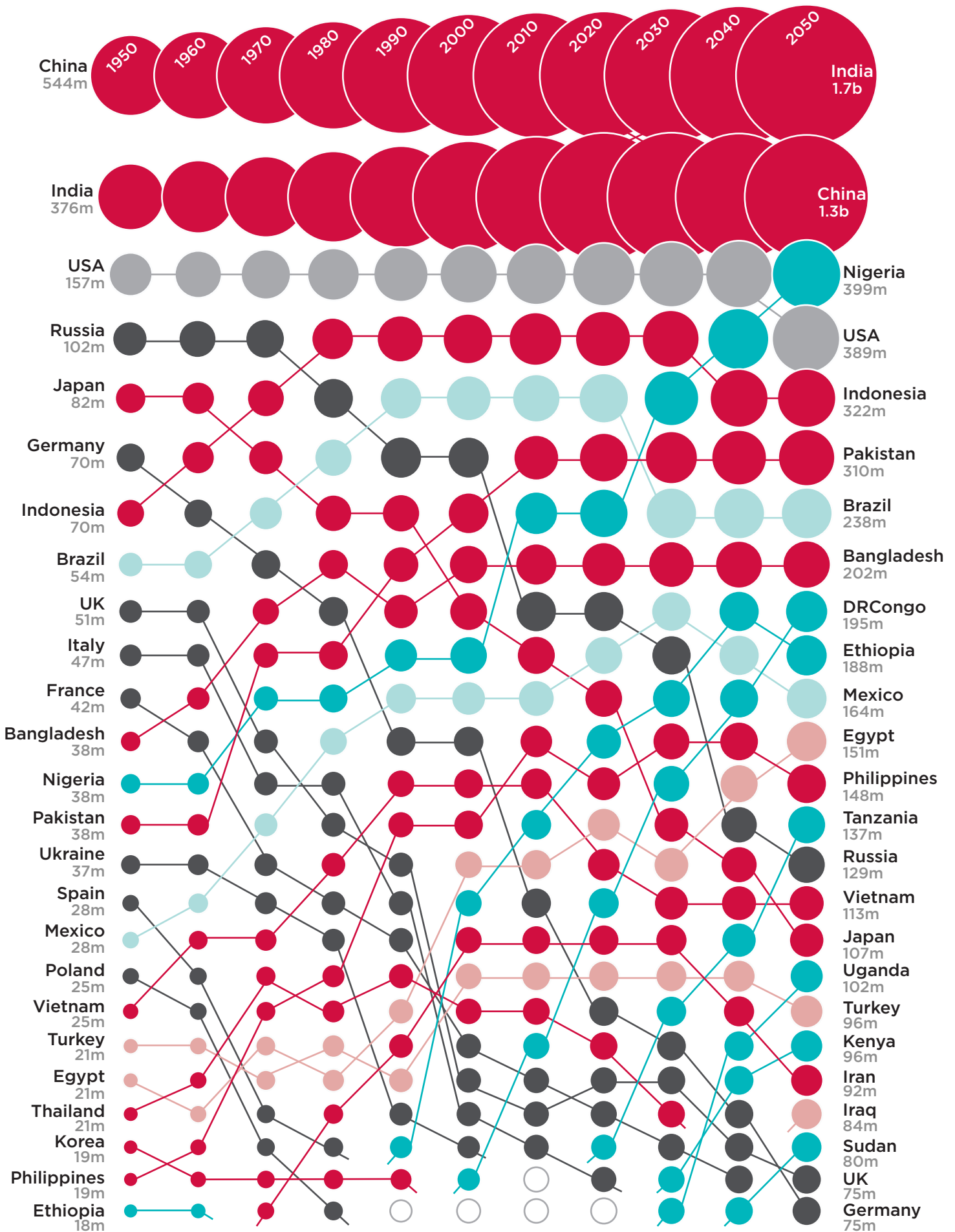
1. THE OLDEST OLD

Population aged 80+ by continent and continent rank, 1950-2050



2. TOTAL POPULATION

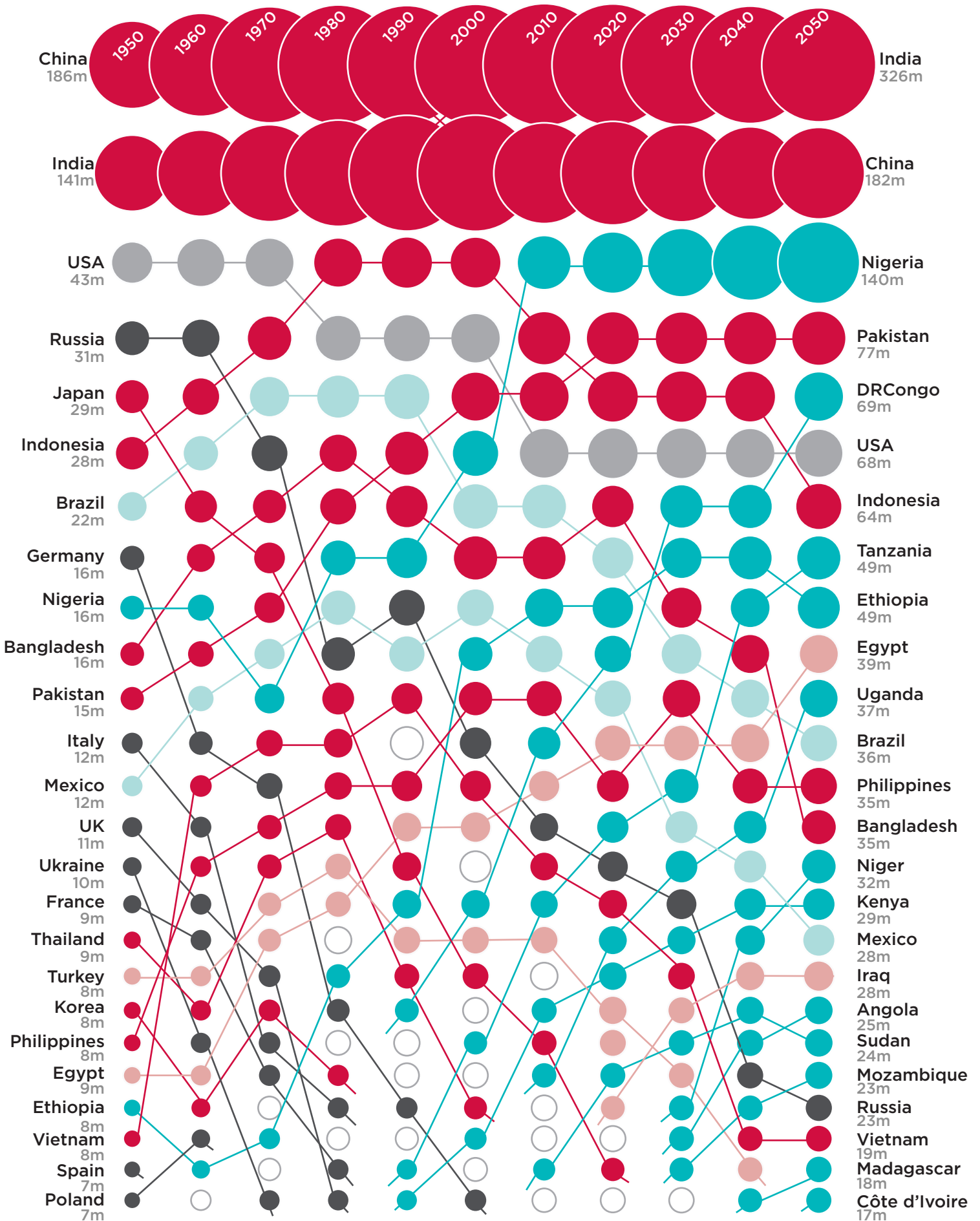
Resident population by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050



Note: Areas of circles, which represent population size, are not comparable across charts (e.g. children circles are not drawn relative to total or working age)

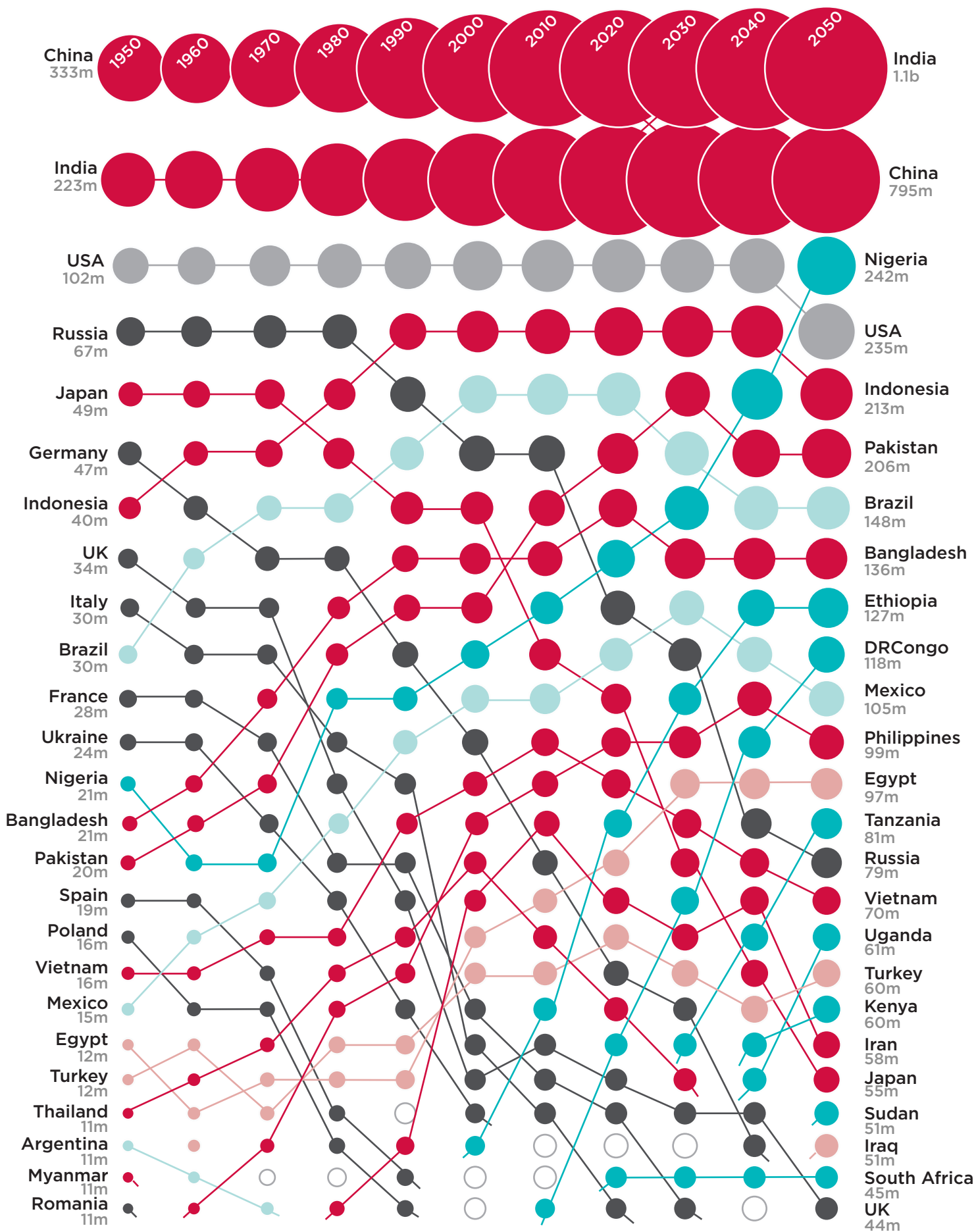
3. CHILDREN

Population aged 0-14 by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050



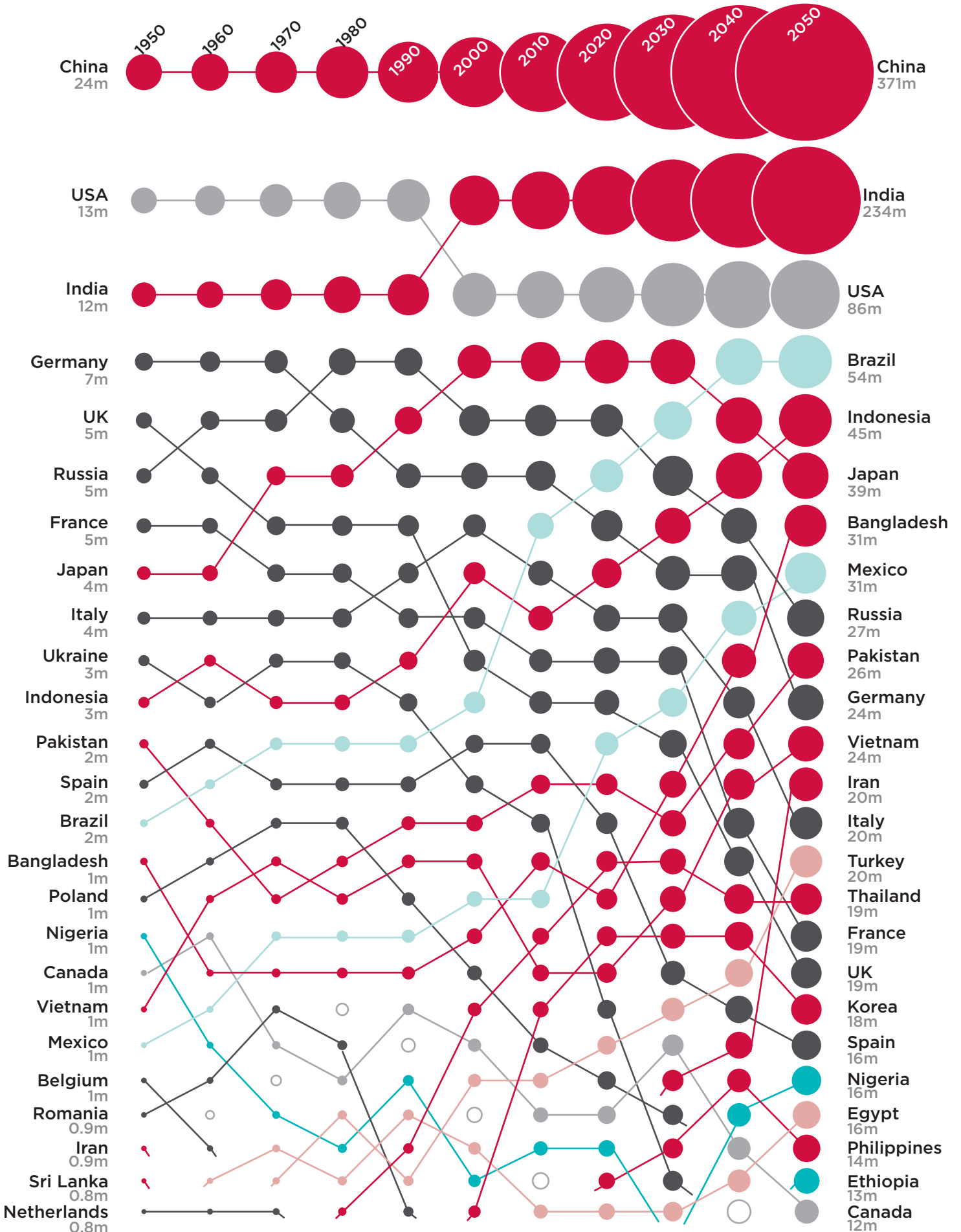
4. WORKING AGE

Population aged 15-64 by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050



5. OLDER PEOPLE

Population aged 65+ by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050



6. THE OLDEST OLD

Population aged 80+ by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050

